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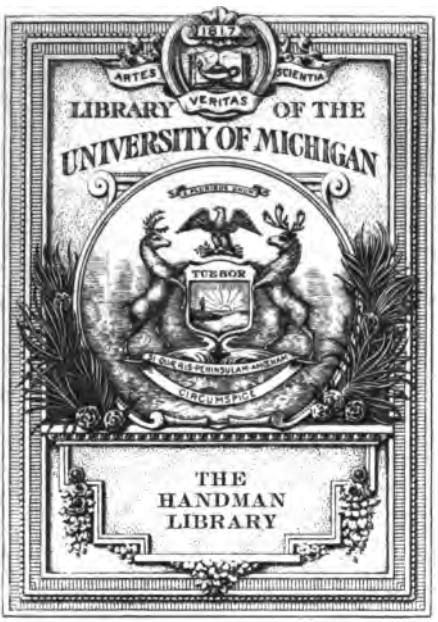

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MODERN ITALIAN LITERATURE

BY

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AUTHOR OF
"GIUSEPPE BARETTI AND HIS FRIENDS"

BOSTON
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PREFACE

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By the end of the sixteenth century the great literary and artistic movement of the Renaissance had spent itself in Italy, and with it the interest of the few people who still care for Italian literature in this country usually comes to an abrupt end. But if Agamemnon was not the first of the world's heroes, neither Dante, nor even Tasso, was the last of Italy's poets. It is true that she ceased to lead the way in literature. Her best energies were absorbed in other directions. But during the eighteenth century there was a steady revival. Literature became more and more modern and drew closer and closer to life as national feeling developed. This was thoroughly awakened by the French Revolution and finally took definite shape with the restoration of Bourbon and Austrian rule in the peninsula. From that time national unity and independence became the ideal of all that was best in the country, and the artists and men of letters were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the cause. Hitherto the literary revival, which went hand in hand with the national revival, has had no share in the interest that the romantic story of the Risorgimento has recently aroused in England. It is true that in the period with which we are concerned Italian literature did not influence our own, but, on the other hand,

England was exercising a very important influence upon Italy, especially during the eighteenth century —an influence which has been the subject of a valuable monograph by Arturo Graf. Faint signs here and there make one hope for at least a partial lifting of the cloud of neglect under which Italian literature, with the single exception of Dante, has so long lain among us, Should these hopes be in any way realised, it seems only right that Parini and Alfieri, Monti and Foscolo, Leopardi, Manzoni and Carducci, to mention no others, should receive the attention that is their due. If this little book helps in some measure to increase the number of their readers its author will be more than satisfied.

L. C-M

KENSINGTON.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	PREFACE	v
I.	INTRODUCTORY — THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND THE DECADENCE ..	1
II.	THE ARCADIAN ACADEMY. METASTASIO AND THE OPERA	11
III.	SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY ..	33
IV.	GOLDONI AND ITALIAN COMEDY	53
V.	LITERARY CRITICISM AND HISTORY.. ..	73
VI.	MINOR LYRIC POETS—FOREIGN INFLUENCES —PARINI AND THE REVIVAL	90
VII.	ALFIERI AND ITALIAN TRAGEDY	119
VIII.	THE NAPOLEONIC PERIOD — MONTI AND FOSCOLO	143
IX.	MANZONI AND THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT..	175
X.	LEOPARDI	210
XI.	POETS, NOVELISTS, AND DRAMATISTS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT	237
XII.	THE DECAY OF ROMANTICISM. CARDUCCI AND THE CLASSICAL REVIVAL	267
XIII.	HISTORY, CRITICISM AND THE LANGUAGE QUESTION	291
XIV.	POETS, NOVELISTS AND DRAMATISTS OF TO-DAY	319
	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	349
	INDEX	351

MODERN ITALIAN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND THE DECADENCE

TASSO was the last of the great Italian poets. During the century that followed his death the country reached its lowest ebb, both politically and economically. We have only to turn to the "Promessi Sposi" for a picture of its condition. The Spanish Viceroys were absolute tyrants and oppressed rich and poor alike. Trade and agriculture were at a standstill. The continuous wars were carried on almost entirely by mercenaries, and brigandage was everywhere rife. The Council of Trent had brought about a violent Catholic reaction and the Inquisition and the censorship ruthlessly repressed all freedom of thought.

Yet the seventeenth century was characterised by a craving for novelty. Never was scientific enquiry, which had broken loose from the chains of authority during the Renaissance, carried on so fearlessly in Italy as at this time; and it reached its zenith in the great discoveries of Galileo. But

when this craving for novelty began to affect literature the results were not so fortunate. Innovations and discoveries have not necessarily any artistic value. But refinement had been pushed to its furthest limits during the Cinquecento, and it was felt to be useless to try to put new wine into the old forms. Consequently there was a violent reaction against the ancients, against Petrarch and Tasso, and all that had hitherto been considered most authoritative in literature.

This is how Belloni[1] describes the characteristics of the "Seicentismo" that was the result. "Abuse of figurative language, excessive fondness for antithesis, strange coupling of opposite, even contradictory terms, confusion between the real and the metaphorical meanings of words and false deductions of consequences which could only be due to such confusion, lack of thought and feeling ill-concealed by a sonorous and affected abundance of adjectives and of florid ornament, increasing use of conceits, plays upon words and similar tricks and witticisms of all kinds, grotesque exaggeration of imagery and colouring, continual straining after effect, in fact, an attempt to conceal a lack of inspiration by means of emphasis and artifice, and to assume a ceaseless activity and vigour of thought where the breath of life is altogether wanting."

But it was the disease of the age, for we find the same phenomena in most of the leading countries of Europe. In England we have Donne, Cowley and Crashaw and the "Metaphysical School," as

[1] "Il Seicento," p. 456.

Johnson called them, whose puns and affectations rival those of Marino himself; in France there is the Hôtel Rambouillet, with Voiture and the "précieuses"; while in Spain Luis Argote y Góngora, who owes much to his Italian predecessors, shows the same tendencies. We find no reason to suppose that the disease spread from any one of these countries. The bacillus of affectation is present in every literature, and will flourish the moment the surroundings are favourable. In Italy "Seicentismo" was not confined to literature. The same peculiarities appeared in art and architecture, while Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) reigned supreme. Belloni considers it impossible to discover any single cause for them, but holds that they owe their origin partly to the political condition of the country, partly to the rigidness of the Catholic reaction, and partly to the influence of Spain, which has always shown a tendency to the florid and the grandiose.

But the leader of the movement is universally considered to have been Giambattista Marino (1569-1625), upon whose shoulders the blame for these affectations throughout Europe has sometimes been laid. He was born at Naples and intended for the law, but his love of poetry, or more probably his loose life, disgusted his father, so that he turned him out of doors. Though Marino's abilities easily found him patrons, his scandalous conduct resulted in his being twice imprisoned. He fled to Rome, where Cardinal Aldobrandini provided for him handsomely in his suite. In 1608 he went with the Cardinal to Turin, to the court of Charles Emanuel

I, a great lover of art and literature and a patron of men of letters, who retained him in his service. Here he had a violent quarrel with Gaspare Murtola, another poet, and was once more imprisoned. In 1615 he visited Paris and became popular with Maria de Medici and her court. His long-expected "Adone" appeared in Paris, magnificently printed in 1623, and Marino's return to his own country was a veritable triumphal progress. Two years later he died in Naples and was given a splendid funeral.

Marino tells us that he always read "with a grappling-iron," noting down anything that might be useful. He borrowed freely from the ancients, especially from Ovid and Claudian, whose decadent style had great attractions for him. "La canzone de' baci," an exposition of the art of kissing in all its varieties, written in his twentieth year, first brought him into notice. "La lira" is a collection of his lyrics. "La Sampogna" (1620) contains his "Idilli" on various classical and pastoral tales. He is at his best in describing the pleasures of the senses, and his pictures of nature, especially of the Bay of Naples, have a more genuine ring than most of his work. But all his worst faults appear in his more conventional poems.

In the "Adone" Marino devotes 40,960 verses to the story of Venus' love for Adonis, the killing of Adonis by the boar and Venus' grief at his death. But very little of the poem is concerned with this story. It is filled out with other myths, descriptions of enchanted gardens, scraps of autobiography or dissertations upon scientific questions—in fact,

with every kind of digression. To us the poem seems unspeakably wearisome, but it is a mirror of the taste of the age in which it was written. It is faultlessly smooth and polished, for Marino was a really great artist in verse. He saw the kind of poetry that would succeed in his day, and realised that he was suited by nature to produce it, and he deliberately set himself to supply the want. His success justified him in his own eyes. Novelty was his aim, " to direct our course upon a new road in pursuit of new thoughts."[1] But unfortunately he had no new thoughts, no new truths to tell us, and his novelty becomes mere eccentricity in form. His actual material was almost all the result of his skilful use of the " grappling-iron," of which he was so proud, and of his plundering of the ancients, against whose authority he pretended to revolt. D'Ancona and Bacci call him " the last Italian poet with a rich, natural talent since the uniting of the new art with the old ; but as he was the last and was born in an age of decadence, he closes the period which begins with Politian, Boiardo and Ariosto and which was already showing signs of corruption and dissolution in Tasso, amid a blaze of artificial light, and to the accompaniment of a great crash of sound."

" With Marino, the last son of the literary Renaissance," says Vittorio Rossi, " art was precipitated into the abyss of decadence ; with Galileo Galilei, the last son of the scientific Renaissance,

[1] E per novo cammino
dietro a novi pensier muovere il corso. Sampogna I, 266.

thought reached its full and fruitful maturity." And there was little sign of decadence in the prose in which it found expression. Galileo himself was one of the best Italian prose-writers of all time. Enrico Caterino Davila (1576-1631), author of the " Istoria delle guerre civili," is the last of the statesmen-historians of whom Machiavelli was the greatest. With his work we may class the important letters and the " Storia della guerra di Findara " of Card. Guido Bentivoglio (1579-1644). Traiano Boccalini (1556-1613) was a leading publicist and a lively writer of prose, and mention must be made of Fra Paolo Sarpi's (1552-1623) admirable " Storia del Concilio di Trento," to which Sforza Pallavicino (1607-1667) wrote a reply on the Papal side.

But if Marino's influence was the most important at this time, it was not the only one at work. Several writers returned to the Greek and Roman lyric poets, notably Pindar and Horace, for their form rather than for their content; and, though, none of them altogether escaped the taint of " Seicentismo " or " Marinismo," as it has also been called, it is from this period, according to Leopardi, that we may date the rise of the Ode, as distinct from the Canzone, to a prominent place in Italian literature and the beginnings of the modern lyric. The first of these was Gabriello Chiabrera (1552-1638), who declared that, like Columbus, he would either discover a new world or perish in the attempt. Chronologically most of his work belongs to the last century, but artistically it belongs to the new. He owes much to Ronsard. Pindar was his master

and he endeavoured, like Trissino, to revive the Pindaric ode, duly divided into strophe, antistrophe and epode, besides writing unrhymed alcaics and asclepiads, such as Carducci was afterwards to perfect. Otherwise he shows a preference for short-lined stanzas in popular measures, more especially for Anacreontics, suggested to him by Ronsard, to which he owes much of his fame. As a rule, he is restrained and dignified, but he is occasionally affected by the disease of his age, and he has a weakness for compound adjectives. His work, which is generally written in honour of his patrons, is lacking in inspiration and his attempts to celebrate their glory in Pindar's manner by means of myths are not very happy. His short autobiography is interesting and the long list of distinctions conferred upon him shows the value the petty potentates and nobles of his day attached to his praises.

Restless and discontented, Fulvio Testi (1593-1646) of Ferrara, was at first highly honoured by the d'Este princes. A collection of poems in praise of the Duke of Savoy, who was taking up arms against Spain, brought about his temporary banishment through Spanish influence, but he was soon restored to favour and employed upon numerous missions. Then he was suddenly arrested on the discovery of his successful intrigues to procure a post in Rome and placed in the fortress of Modena, where he died of disease in the same year.

Leopardi unhesitatingly placed Testi at the head of the lyric poets of the seventeenth century,

and few people will dispute this decision. Horace was his model, and he wisely refused to attempt to imitate Pindar. His subjects, such as the corruption of the age or the charms of the country, or the fickleness of courts, though obviously suggested by Horace, are yet coloured by his own experience and have the foundation in fact and the genuine inspiration that is lacking in Chiabrera, whose form is, however, more perfect than Testi's.

Vincenzo da Filicaia (1642-1707) owed his fame in his own day principally to his canzoni on the siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683, and on its subsequent relief. Christina of Sweden was so impressed by them that she invited the author to Rome and undertook to provide for the education of his sons after his death. But these canzoni are now rightly discredited as mere florid rhetoric without a spark of genuine inspiration, and Filicaia will henceforth always be remembered for his two famous patriotic sonnets,

> " Italia, Italia, o tu, cui feo la sorte
> dono infelice di bellezza."

and

> " Dov'è, Italia, il tuo braccio ? "

both of which probably belong to 1790.

We must also mention Francesco Redi (1626-98), a doctor and distinguished man of science, whose dithyramb in praise of Montepulciano wine is full of life, and energy and the best of its kind in Italian, and Alessandro Guidi (1650-1712) whose style, though possessed of all the pomposity and excessive rhetoric of the age, is nevertheless not without a

certain stateliness. The subject of his best poem, " Endimione," was suggested to him by Queen Christina of Sweden, who even contributed some verses to it, which are always printed in different type. Guidi introduced the canzone with unrhymed lines, which Leopardi was afterwards to make his own.

To this century Italy also owes her first mock-heroic poem, the " Secchia Rapita," by Alessandro Tassoni (1565-1635), which was the parent of all later poems of the kind, including Pope's " Rape of the Lock " and Boileau's " Lutrin." The story is founded upon fact, for the " secchia," or wooden bucket, had actually been captured from the Bolognese by the people of Modena in 1325 during one of the many wars of the time and is still to be seen in Modena. But this is merely the nucleus of Tassoni's poem. He was thoroughly in sympathy with the revolt against the authority of the ancients which characterised his day. He believed that the poetry of his own age was of necessity superior to that of the previous century, just as this must yield to what was to follow, for he adopted the doctrine of the evolution of poetry in all its literalness. But past and present alike are held up to ridicule in the " Secchia Rapita." Homer and Petrarch, Aristotle and King Enzo, the rising middle classes and ancient mythology all come under the lash. Many of the incidents are real, and more than one of the descriptions, *e.g.*, the story of Endymion, are really poetical. But, as a rule, the stanzas begin seriously and end in mockery. People

of all ages, even of his own, are made to take part in the great war that is supposed to have arisen and the Conte di Culagna, who is mercilessly satirised, is known to have been Alessandro Brusantini, who had been so unfortunate as to incur Tassoni's resentment.

CHAPTER II

THE ARCADIAN ACADEMY. METASTASIO AND THE OPERA

As was only natural, the tide soon set strongly in the opposite direction. The Arcadian Academy,[1] which represents the first attempt at a reform, sought to counteract Marino's turgid conceits by the imagined simplicity of the pastoral life. To emphasise this desire for simplicity its members placed themselves under the guardianship of the Child Jesus and took care to explain that their paganism was only a poetic licence and that they were thoroughly good Christians. This Academy owes its origin to Christina of Sweden, as the members acknowledged by making her their patron with the title of Basilissa. She delighted in such institutions and had presided over a literary academy in Rome at the Palazzo Corsini during the last years of her life. In 1690, the year after her death, the gatherings were continued. The well-known story relates how some dozen men of letters were wandering in the fields near the Castle of S. Angelo on a glorious spring morning, reciting verses, when one of them exclaimed, "It seems as if Arcadia were

[1] Concari, "Il Settecento," c. I; Landau, "Geschichte der Ital. Lit. im achtzehnten zahrhundert," II. 4; Vernon Lee, "Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy," p. 13.

reviving among us." Italy has always been the home of academies and the Arcadian Academy, with Crescimbeni, the historian of Italian poetry, as its President (Custode) at once came into existence. The members took pastoral names. Guido, the laureate of Christina's little band, was Erilo Cleoneo, Crescimbeni Alfesibeo Cario; and very soon, thanks largely to the energy and enthusiasm of their President, the academy captured Roman society. Cardinals, Princes of the Holy Roman Empire and high-born ladies vied with one another to become members. Colonies were established all over Italy till Crescimbeni could boast that there were over a thousand poets in the country. This was not surprising when one sonnet was enough to earn a man the title. In 1725, King John V of Portugal gave the Academy a triangular piece of ground on the Janiculum, called the Serbatoio, which is still its headquarters.

Arcadia was thoroughly in keeping with the artificiality of the country life of the eighteenth century, whether in Italy, in France, or in the England of Queen Anne. But Italy had good cause for turning her back on the real world. Can we blame these lawyers, priests and patricians for making verse their plaything and shutting themselves in their lovely artificial villas away from the miseries of a land overrun by foreign conquerors, "scourged with all the plagues of Egypt, the people treated more inhumanly than slaves in Syria or Africa," to quote the words of a contemporary, Cardinal Sacchetti? Of course, great poetry was impossible

in the circumstances. Snobbery was rife, for no offence must be given to the local patron, in whose gardens the meetings were held. Consequently, it was considered bad manners to compare a fellow Arcadian to anything less than Pindar or Sophocles or the Queen of Sheba. But the craving for admission to these academies helped to raise the standing of men of letters by enabling them, at least nominally, to mix on an equal footing with the nobility.

These shepherds were loyal Petrarchists in giving the senses no place in love, which was confined to ideal beauty. Only the shorter forms of poetry—the ode, the sonnet and, above all, the "canzonetta," —were cultivated. Originality was discouraged on principle. The quality of poetry was not to be judged by " the conceits, but by the excellence of the imitation." Italy was deluged with beautifully-bound volumes, stamped with the pan-pipes and the pine and laurel wreath, the emblem of "Gli Arcadi," celebrating marriages, the taking of the veil, the deaths of lap-dogs or of pet canaries, and every conceivable event. Unfortunately, Arcadia did not at first possess a single real poet among all its thousand versifiers, and Crescimbeni himself was the only man of letters of any distinction in the Academy. This return to nature and primitive simplicity as a protest against Marino was excellent in theory, but the actual result was disastrous. Poetry became a toy for the amusement of dilettanti in drawing-rooms, artificial in its simplicity, in its attitude towards women, in its scenery and in its setting.

In fact, except in the hands of a few writers, it cannot be said to touch life at any point. Yet Perfetti, who was actually crowned on the Capitol like Petrarch, declares that Apollo one day told him that Arcadia should live.[1] And he was right, for the Academy still exists, like the Serbatoio, but in a state of absolute neglect, and the reigning king of Sweden is still its patron.

We shall only mention a few of the principal Arcadians.[2] Carlo Frugoni (1692-1768) is generally considered the most complete embodiment of their ideals. Baretti invented the word "frugoneria" to describe his sonorous, grandiose style. The struggle to obtain release from the monastic vows which he had rashly taken in his youth and the unsettled life he was obliged to lead may have helped to corrupt his not inconsiderable gifts. His later years were spent in peace in the service of the Duke of Parma. He was so prolific an author that even his admirer, the Duke's Minister, Du Tillot, who was a great patron of men of letters, urged him not to write a sonnet every day of his life. Besides libretti for numerous operas, he is credited with some 2,000 occasional poems, in the course of which he tried almost every conceivable metre. He deserves credit, however, for popularising the unrhymed hendecasyllable, the Italian blank verse. Though he once describes himself as "a versifier

[1] Vivrà l'Arcadia. Un dí mel disse,
mel disse Apollo.

[2] For all these poets, see Carducci's "Poeti erotici del secolo XVIII." (Florence, 1868.)

and nothing more—not a poet, a name usurped by many and deserved by few," he was very vain and his contemporaries took him at his own value. Bettinelli actually ranks him with Algarotti and himself above Dante. In the next generation Monti called him "padre incorrotto di corrotti figli"[1] and even Sismondi finds little to blame in him. At his best Frugoni is pretty, but he is usually either turgid or mawkish, never going below the surface in thought, feeling or description. In fact, he is little more than an improvisatore. With him Carducci classes Casti (1724-1803), an unworthy priest whose more important work we shall discuss elsewhere, as a typical representative of the "feeble sensuality, the rouged faces and the curled and powdered hair of the belles and beaux of the eighteenth century"; for as a lyrist Casti only echoes Frugoni.

Tommaso Crudeli (1703-45) lived principally at Florence, giving lessons to the large English colony there. He wrote a great quantity of verse, trying, as Carducci puts it, to graft French gallantry upon Chiabrera's tree. His fables, in imitation of those of Lafontaine, are probably his best work. Unfortunately for him, his English friends induced him to become a Mason, with the result that he fell into the clutches of the Inquisition. He was rescued, largely through the efforts of the English minister at Florence, but only on condition that he should never leave his house at Poppi, where he died. Crudeli possessed a rough common sense

[1] "Alla Marchesa Malaspina."

which saved him from the childishness of many of his contemporaries.[1]

Far and away the best of the lyrists of this early period was Paolo Rolli (1687-1765). A Roman by birth, he was a notable improvisatore as a boy, and, like Metastasio, was patronised by Gravina. He attracted the attention of Bolingbroke and came to England in 1715. Here he taught Italian to the Royal Family, took pupils from among the nobility and wrote operas, which Carducci calls "detestable," for Handel and others. His translation of "Paradise Lost" is "so faithful to the text as to be unfaithful to the traditions of Italian poetry" and earned him a place in the "Dunciad." He also edited various classics. But as a lyric poet he has considerable merit, and not even Metastasio has a greater variety of metres. His gentle, melancholy "Solitario bosco ombroso" rivalled Metastasio's "Ode to Nice" in its day, and, according to Carrer, was as popular with the women of the people as with the ladies in their drawing-rooms. Goethe learnt it from Frau Rath before he knew a word of Italian. Rolli differs from the average Arcadian by the fact that he describes things as he really sees them, and he is, in consequence, really vivid. His picture of a pointer, for instance, pointing for its master with its paw in

[1] This is shown by his parody on the absurd line, "Il leon che scherza e ride."

"Il vezzoso terremoto
va ingoiando le città;
ed il fulmine giulivo
non lasciando un uomo vivo
va scherzando in qua e in là."

air[1] is something quite new for Arcadia. It at once gives his work a certain individuality. Indeed, his detailed descriptions often remind one of miniatures. There is no depth, no thought in his light, airy trifles, but they were very popular in their day and were admirably suited to while away an idle hour at an assembly or on a country excursion in England, or at an Arcadian gathering in Italy. Deep drinking prevailed everywhere in England at that time. This may account for Rolli being the first Italian poet to revive the drinking-song. He was also the real inventor of the lyrical cantata. Bertòla says that in his *canzonette* he is inferior to Metastasio neither in grace nor in truth, and superior in elegance ; and his simplicity and naturalness are obvious. He appreciated the English ladies as much as Baretti after him. " How sweet it is to wander at ease in the royal garden at Kensington when the end of the day draws near ! Youth in its prime was strolling on the short, thick, soft grass fanned by the gentle breath of the fresh breeze. Frank young lovers mingle with the nymphs as, grave or gay, they return their pleasant greetings." [2]

[1] E con la zampa in aria
fa cenno al cacciator.

[2] " Quanto è piacevole gire a disporto
entro al regale giardino di Kensington
quando già il termine del giorno è corto !
" Su folte e morbide minute erbette
di giovinezza il fior passeggiava
al soffio placido di fresche aurette.
" Frammisti i giovani franchi ed amorosi
van tra le ninfe, che or liete or serie
saluti rendono dolce vezzosi."
" Londra e le sue donne."

He returned to spend his declining years in Todi, rich and with a magnificent library; yet he had not a good word for England in the "Marziale in Albion," the worthless epigrams he left unpublished at his death. No wonder Carducci calls him "hard, grasping, ungrateful, eccentric and proud."

We must pass over in silence the other 900 and odd poets of the academies, and proceed to Pietro Metastasio, the greatest product of Arcadia. We shall first, however, give some account of the "melodrama" or opera, with the reform and perfection of which his name is so closely connected.[1] Italy can claim to have given birth to the opera and finally to have brought it to maturity in the eighteenth century. As Concari puts it, "Secular music, which had gradually developed in the 'Trionfi,' in entertainments given by the nobility and in Carnival spectacles, had passed into the interludes of the comedies and ended by being united in harmonious sweetness with dramatic poetry, clothing with its notes the fates of the great tragic characters, the shepherds, and even the gods." By this time, in fact, Italian opera had not only driven almost every other form of dramatic entertainment from the stage in the land of its birth, but had invaded virtually the whole of Europe. Rich and poor, the nobility, the cardinals and the minor ecclesiastical dignitaries, all classes, in fact, were numbered among its patrons.

[1] Concari, c. 2; Landau, Pt. II, c. 3; Vernon Lee, who is at her best here, pp. 103-353; E. Masi "Parrucche e Sanculotti" (Milano, 1886); F. de Sanctis' "Storia della letteratura italiana," c. 19.

Yet it was in many ways in a very unsatisfactory state at the beginning of the century. Scenic display was the first consideration, and the audience expected the most elaborate stage effects. We hear of cars drawn by rhinoceroses, triumphal processions, flying gods and goddesses, gardens changing into islands or into scenes in the lower world—effects such as are expected nowadays only in a pantomime or a Shakespeare revival.

Some kind of reform was absolutely necessary, and the reformer appeared in Venice in the person of Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750), the distinguished scholar whose work as a man of learning will be discussed elsewhere. Zeno wished to construct his plays more regularly, on the lines of French classical tragedy, without, however, rigidly observing the unities of time and place. He definitely separated the recitative from the air and regulated the finale at the end of the act. The result was an artistic whole, far superior to the work of his predecessors. Zeno had given early proof of his abilities in historical poems such as " L'incendio Veneto," and he prefers classical or historical subjects for his operas, though he often merely adapts a play, like Racine's " Andromache," to suit his purposes. " Scipione," " Semiramide," and " Caio Fabrizio " were among his most popular productions. With the assistance of Pariati he even dramatised " Don Quixote " and the story of " Hamlet." The complete ignorance of Shakespeare prevalent in Italy at this time can be gathered from the fact that Zeno had never apparently heard of our greatest poet. " Ambleto "

is based on Saxo Grammaticus' story with some remarkable variations. The king, Ambleto and Valdemaro are all in love with Veremonda, Shakespeare's Ophelia, while she and another princess are equally in love with Ambleto.

It is obvious that the traditions of the opera were more important than historic truth in Zeno's eyes. Everything harrowing or tragic is eliminated. The style, like the music, is graceful, refined and even, while the heroes have the manners of the " cicisbeo " of the day. Only the outline of the story is kept. As the tenor and soprano, the youthful voices, must have the chief parts, love, the passion of youth, reigns supreme ; and the poet's imagination must adapt the story accordingly. Hence it is not surprising that the plots are monotonously alike. Zeno's best work is to be found in his oratorios, such as " Gioaz " and " David," in which he was hardly surpassed by Metastasio himself. But he wrote operas on these lines for many years in Venice, with Pariati's aid, and from 1718-1728 in Vienna, where he held the post of Court poet to the Emperor's Italian opera company. Zeno's heroes, his style and his ideas were as dignified as himself, but he had no poetic inspiration. He was a scholar and his poems are the poems of a scholar, the result of reflection ; nor has his verse the rare qualities that harmonise perfectly with music. He won the respect, and even the friendship of the Emperor ; but no marks of royal favour could extinguish his longing to return to his scholarly pursuits in Venice, and his honesty is proved

by the fact that he came back a poor man. On bidding him farewell, the Emperor asked Zeno who was to succeed him. "The best poet Italy possesses, Metastasio," was the answer.

Pietro Trapassi, or Metastasio (1698-1782), was born in Rome. His father, an ex-soldier of the Papal Guard, was then a small tradesman, who meant his son to become a jeweller. One day, however, while improvising in the streets, the boy attracted the notice of Gravina, the great lawyer and leader of the attempted schism in Arcadia against Crescimbeni, who took him home as his pupil and afterwards adopted him as his son (1709). Gravina decided to change his name, and his Arcadian experience helped him to hit upon Metastasio to symbolise his altered life. The boy was allowed to read nothing but the Latin classics and the great Italian masters before Tasso, and these studies resulted in the "Giustino," a classical play composed in his fourteenth year on a subject from the "Italia Liberata" on the lines of Gravina's own tedious productions. In 1712 Gravina took Metastasio to Naples, where his good looks, his charming manners, and his gifts as an improvisatore won all hearts. But Princess Pignatelli saw the danger of the terrible strain of these improvisations and made his guardian promise never to allow him to improvise again. So he was packed off to Scalea, in Calabria, to grow strong and learn philosophy under Gregorio Caloprese, who had been the first to introduce Descartes into Italy; and these lessons may have stimulated the habit of mental observation

which afterwards stood him in such good stead. In 1718 Gravina died, leaving Metastasio his library and a considerable sum of money, with instructions to edit his works and erect a monument to his memory, instructions which, to his shame, he never fulfilled. The attractive young "abate" made the most of his liberty, mixing freely in Roman society and devouring Marino, Tasso, Ovid and other forbidden fruit, his natural taste for which had only been whetted by his rigorous upbringing. Soon, however, his purse grew lean and he found it advisable to retire to Naples and apprentice himself to a lawyer, who, according to the story, exacted from him a promise that he would not write verses—a promise which, needless to say, he did not keep. His surroundings were thoroughly congenial—perfect scenery such as appealed to his artistic nature and a lively society to pet him to his heart's content. It was in Naples that most of his lyrics were written.[1] He certainly has the true lyric gift, with the necessary touch of melancholy, and his Neapolitan *cantate* to Nice seem to describe a genuine passion, which breaks out in "La Tempesta" even in those formal days. His "La Libertà," better known as the Ode to Nice, beginning "Grazie agli inganni tuoi," may be called the love-poem of the eighteenth century. Baretti says that he met many people in England whose acquaintance with Italian was of the slightest, who could, nevertheless, repeat it in the original, so perfect was the

[1] Carducci, "Poeti erotici del secolo, XVIII"; Concari c. I; Landau, Pt. II, c. 4.

expression, though they did not know one of the three translations in Dodsley's Collections. To us it seems very slight, but Carducci well observes that "we of the nineteenth century who, in questions of the heart, have weathered so many summer storms, from Lamartine through Balzac to de Musset, and from Goethe through Byron to Heine, must accept the idea that the eighteenth century had a perfect right to dish up its 'dear heart,' as Homer calls it, to suit its own taste." Metastasio's lyrics are, in fact, "feeling put into words" in idyllic surroundings, and they were certainly the best in their day. As to their permanent value, we cannot do better than quote another passage from Carducci's admirable essay.[1]

"Thirty years, and what years! had passed since the poet's death, when the people of Naples, on the night of July 5th, 1820, were waiting in great excitement for news from the Palace. Day dawned and a rumour arose and spread that the king had accepted the Spanish constitution. To such a gathering in Naples poetry was a necessity: the poet at least was there, for improvising among the crowd was Gabriele Rossetti.[2] Can you guess the *obligato* refrain upon which the people insisted from this singer of a pæan to the Spanish constitution? Two verses from this very 'Canzonetta' to Nice—

"Non sogno questa volta,
Non sogno libertà."

[1] "Poeti erotici del secolo, XVIII," p. xxvi.

[2] The father of Dante Gabriel.

Now when a poet has succeeded in keeping the heart and memory of a people faithful to him for so many years, that poet undoubtedly embodies the imagination of his country."

Metastasio, however, was soon to find his true vocation. In 1721 the Viceroy bade him write something for the birthday of the Empress, the wife of the Emperor Charles VI. He produced the "Orti Esperidi," which instantly made him famous, for it gave full scope to his rich poetic gift, his descriptive powers and the musical qualities of his verse. Venus, the chief part, was played by Mariana Bulgarelli, better known as La Romanina, a celebrated singer and virtuosa, who took such a fancy to the poet that she insisted on his becoming an inmate of her house. Here he met all the musical world of Naples, including Porpora, the composer, and the famous singer, Carlo Broschi, or Farinello, whom he afterwards came to call his twin brother and who did him many a service when he was reigning favourite at the Spanish court in later days. Metastasio thus acquired a thorough knowledge of music and of the opera.

"Didone abbandonata," his first real opera, which was largely inspired by the Romanina, who played the title-rôle, appeared in 1721. It took Naples by storm and was given at Venice and in Rome in the following year, being set to music by all the chief composers of the day. Metastasio's position was now assured, for he showed from the first a genius for writing musical verse which has never been surpassed. He could not produce a

dissonance and helped, no doubt, by the musical character of his mother tongue, his words flowed in a harmonious stream of sounds and cadences that was pure song. But the stream is not deep ; there is no thought in Metastasio and more emotion than passion. He was incapable of feeling anything deeply himself, though he could shed sentimental tears over the pathetic parts of his own plays while he was writing them, just as the ladies would do when they were performed. The " Didone " is the best of his early works. The action is swift and Aeneas, though not in love, is manly, while Didone is regal in her dignity and is clearly drawn from the Romanina herself. The final scene, where she throws herself into the burning palace, must have been very effective. But Metastasio was at his best in the love scenes, and in this play he runs over the whole scale of the passion, showing its tenderness, its jealousy, its pride, and its languor. Didone's hesitations may be natural, but they sound a little strange when read in cold blood without the music. Indeed, we should never forget that we only possess half of what Metastasio's work really meant to his contemporaries ; and the mere fact that it can still excite our admiration as it stands, without the music, speaks volumes for his greatness. We must also remember that his operas were often put together in great haste at a few days' notice.

Custom obliged him to provide comic interludes for the " Didone," but he was soon able to abandon the practice. Shortly afterwards the Romanina

retired from her profession and went to Rome with Metastasio, taking his whole family under her protection. His success was greater than ever, but the plays that followed—" Siroe," " Catone in Utica," " Artaserse," etc.—were artificial in construction and inferior to " Didone," though they were enthusiastically welcomed throughout Europe. Something more was required to carry the poet a step forward in his career and this was forthcoming in the invitation to succeed Apostolo Zeno at Vienna. After a little difficulty about the salary, Aeneas abandoned his Dido in 1730, never to see her again, though she was still burdened with his family. Metastasio's work was highly appreciated both by Charles VI and by Maria Teresa, but the deferential little abate was not loved by his royal master as the manly Zeno had been, and his occupation made it impossible for him to attain the position in society or in court circles in Vienna which he had held in Rome, and which he considered his due. He might instruct the princesses in Italian and superintend their performance of one of his operas, but he was never really satisfied. Honours and distinctions from sovereigns, academies and individuals poured in upon him from all sides, and he even grew wealthy. The Martinez family, to whom he left his fortune, saved him the trouble of housekeeping, and he made a conquest of the Countess Althan, a Pignatelli, the sister of his Neapolitan patroness, whom he is even said to have secretly married. The death of the Romanina in 1734 really distressed him for a time, and he insisted

on the fortune she left him going to her husband's family.

But Vienna opened a new world to Metastasio. Of humble origin, obsequious and timid, he was enormously impressed by the stateliness of court life, and his attitude towards the Emperor, as described in his account of his first interview, never changed. He continued to regard him with awe and veneration. It was this experience that gave his work between 1731 and 1740 a majestic dignity, a delicateness of touch and a confidence which raises it above anything that he had hitherto done ; and such dignity is essentially in keeping with the simple music of the time. Among the eleven plays of this period are " Olimpiade," " Adriano in Siria," " Clemenza di Tito," " Achille in Sciro," " Temistocle," " Zenobia " and " Attilio Regolo," which was not, however, performed till 1750, and with " Didone " they contain his best work. In " Adriano " he told the Romanina he had drawn his own character. " I decide and repent ; then again I repent of my repentance. Soon, weary of this long wavering, I lose the power to distinguish right from wrong. At last I find time pressing and choose the worse course." [1]

Metastasio considered " Regolo " his masterpiece,

[1] " Scelgo, mi pento ;
Poi d'essermi pentito
Mi ritorno a pentir. Mi stanco intanto
Nel lungo dubitar, tal che dal male
Il ben non più distinguo. Alfin mi veggio
Stretto dal tempo e mi risvolo al peggio."
" Adriano in Siria," III, 3.

and it is the one play in which he insisted on harrowing his audiences' feelings with an unhappy ending. Hence the delay in its production. We ourselves prefer the " Clemenza di Tito." There is something peculiarly noble in the Emperor's absolute devotion to his country's interests, combined with his genuine affection for his friends, his unwillingness to believe evil of them and his readiness to forgive them as soon as he can, even for such a crime as treason. This human element is entirely lacking in Regolo. Then Annio's devotion to Sesto, which is like that of Lidia to Megacle in "Olimpiade," shows the high ideals of friendship the poet held. Indeed, Metastasio never forgot his moral purpose. His heroes are as heroic and his villains as black-hearted as those in a melodrama in our sense of the term. Most of his plays represent a conflict between two passions, one of them generally being love. In " Regolo " it is between patriotism and personal interest, in " Tito " between loyalty and love, in " Olimpiade " between love and friendship.

In Vienna Metastasio learnt how to draw the dignified Roman to perfection. This dignity and gravity was characteristic of the eighteenth century, with its " abati " in full wigs and dark clothes. He made no attempt to put himself at the point of view of the nation to which his hero belonged, and his Temistocle might be twin brother to his Regolo, for it was the Roman type of character that predominated in his best plays. He takes the bare outline of the story. For his purpose the action

must be swift and direct, allowing of good scenic effects, and the characters few. The rest is filled in with scenes of jealousy or misunderstandings, which, except in his very best work, are all of one pattern. Concari says that his plots habitually begin with a declaration of love followed by an outburst of jealousy, a reconciliation and finally a marriage; and towards the end of his life the Neapolitans altogether refused to put up with plays so monotonously alike. Love is, as we have seen, the dominant passion in the opera. This and the necessity of distributing the airs regularly were traditions which greatly hampered Metastasio's art. Tragic endings were as opposed to his own taste as to that of his public[1] and when in his earlier days in Rome he had allowed Cato to die on the stage, he was attacked by Pasquino in consequence. However, " Regolo " is an exception, though it is difficult to see how the play could have ended otherwise.

Metastasio is seen at his best in the airs, the tiny lyrics scattered through the operas, especially at the ends of the acts, as solos or duets, to which the musician devoted all his skill, for the speeches were delivered in recitative. De Sanctis compares them to the harp of David soothing Saul's frenzy. Metastasio usually fits some general sentiment to one of his light, tripping, rhyming metres, which are absolute music in themselves, and the results

[1] As Stendhal puts it, " Il n'a pris des passions que ce qu'il en fallait pour intéresser ; rien d'âcre et de farouche ; il ennoblit la volupté.' "

at once became proverbs on everybody's lips. Let us take an instance at random—

> " È la fede degli amanti
> come l'Arabia Felice ;
> che vi sia ciascun lo dice,
> ove sia nessun lo sa."
>
> " Demetrio " II, 3.

To our thinking, he never gave better proof of this gift than in " Olimpiade," with the pretty " Se cerca, se dice,"[1] and the two famous lines,

> " Nei giorni tuoi felici
> ricordati di me,"

which are as near music as words can be, and haunt the ear with the plaintive echo of a song. A collection of proverbs could easily be made from his plays. These airs show the same qualities as his early lyrics, raised to a higher power. He has often been accused of impoverishing the language, for a modern calculation puts his vocabulary at no more than 4,000 words ; but the effects he produced with them were eminently beautiful. In many ways he rather anticipated the later romantic drama than continued the old classical traditions, for he scorned the subterfuge of confidants and showed little respect for the unities, though he endeavoured to make his peace with Aristotle in a treatise upon them in his old age. His later work shows a distinct falling off and was a mere repetition of his earlier plays, as he was well aware, and his last years, though he enjoyed

[1] " Olimpiade " II, 10.

good health and was loaded with honours, were far from being his happiest.

Metastasio was a perfect embodiment of his age. Throughout his work there is not the faintest trace of the coming upheaval, not an echo of the wars that were distressing his native land. He lived in an ideal world, like a true Arcadian. He exactly represents the first half of the eighteenth century. Hence his extraordinary popularity in his day and the comparative neglect into which he has since fallen. His works were known in Brazil to people who had never heard of Vienna. Dr. Burney, who wrote his life, declares that he was "possessed of every moral and social virtue that embellishes society and exalts human nature," while Baretti, who was no flatterer, placed him just after the greatest poets. Goldsmith could not understand why any other operas than his were ever given. In the next generation Monti declared that his works would outlast the world, for the angels would learn them by heart, if they had not already done so.[1] And it is by his own age that we must judge him, for it has been well said that to blame Metastasio for lacking the high purpose that inspired Dante and Alfieri is like laughing at the nightingale for not being able to fill the woods with the noble roar of the lion.

Metastasio had definitely separated tragedy from comedy in the opera, but comedy continued to develop on its own lines throughout the early part

[1] For a collection of praise of Metastasio, see Landau, p. 350.

of the century, especially at Naples, and often in dialect, for it aimed at portraying the life of the people. The best composers wrote music for the opera-bouffe, so great was its popularity, till at last it gave birth to a masterpiece in the " Socrate immaginario," which has been called " one of the most delightful productions of Italian dramatic literature." It was planned by the witty Galiani and completed by Lorenzi, the comic dramatist, and is largely an amusing skit on a learned Neapolitan doctor. At Vienna, opera-bouffe soon ousted serious opera almost entirely. Here Casti wrote " Teodoro in Venezia " and his famous " Prima la musica, poi le parole," in revenge for his having once been told that Salieri had completed the music and he must provide words for it—a circumstance which clearly shows the inevitable doom that was threatening the librettist. More important was Lorenzo Da Ponte, Casti's rival for Imperial favour, a literary adventurer whose memoirs are capital reading and who ended his days in America. He was in Vienna from 1782-1793 and wrote " Don Giovanni " and the " Nozze di Figaro " for Mozart. But as literature the opera reached its zenith and disappeared with Metastasio and his contemporaries. Since then the words have been a mere accessory to the music.

CHAPTER III

SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY

THE great wave of scientific enquiry which had spread over Italy in the seventeenth century and of which Galileo was the most glorious product had almost spent itself by the beginning of our period.[1] Research was still actively continued throughout the peninsula, but there are few great names to record. Bologna, and more especially Pavia, where Volta and Spallanzani were teaching at the same time, were now the chief centres. Galvani's electrical experiments on frogs, which were perfected by Volta in his invention of the electric pile, have raised both men to the first rank in the scientific world. Though Lagrange was born in Turin and did not go to France till he was thirty, Italy can hardly count him among her sons; but Boscovich was an eminent mathematician. Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729-99) gained distinction in zoology, physiology and geology. His studies of the circulation of the blood, digestion and reproduction were really important, while his books of travel, especially his "Viaggi alle due Sicelie e in alcune parti dell'Appennino" are eminently readable and are the result of careful observation. He refused many offers from foreign universities and remained at

[1] For this chapter see Landau, Pt. I, c. 3; Concari, c. 4 and 5.

Pavia, in spite of unjust persecution and violent quarrels with some of his colleagues, till his death.

In philosophy Italy can boast of one great name, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744). The Peace of Utrecht had transferred Naples and Milan from the reactionary Spanish Government to the enlightened rule of Austria, with the result that, while Rome was still in the bonds of Arcadia and Florence of the Crusca, these two towns were the centres of progress. Naples was not merely the birthplace of the opera and the opera-bouffe, but the starting-point of the philosophical revival. Descartes was long in reaching Italy, for Gregorio Caloprese, the master of both Gravina and Metastasio, was his first disciple there, but by Vico's day the Cartesian system completely held the field.

Vico's father was a bookseller. A bad fall in his childhood, which actually cracked his skull-bone, put an end to his early gaiety and made him melancholy and serious. He was extraordinarily precocious and was virtually self-taught, for he would not submit to the slowness of the ordinary methods which were necessary for teaching the ordinary boy. He never attended any master's classes for long, and it was by the advice of his teachers, rather than by their lessons, that he benefited. He was destined for the law and won a case for his father at the age of sixteen, when he was complimented for his speech by the opposing counsel. But his nervous temperament soon made practice at the bar intolerable to him, and he gladly accepted a tutorship amid congenial surroundings in the

country, which greatly improved his health. Here he remained for nine years and here his ideas began to take shape.[1]

On his return to Naples he was made Professor of Rhetoric with the munificent salary of one hundred scudi a year. As he soon married, he found himself obliged even to write verses to order for his daily bread. In fact, he was continually in financial difficulties, and he tells us, in his autobiography, that he was often compelled to compose his great works in the room where his children were playing. He never obtained the Chair of Law, which he was so well fitted to fill and which was the goal of his ambition. In 1735 he was made Royal Historian, but very shortly afterwards his mind gave way so that he was unable to enjoy the benefits of his increased income.

Tacitus and Plato were the first great writers to influence him. He then became acquainted with Baon, whose " De Augmentis Scientiarum " made an indelible impression upon him. When we have added Grotius' "De jure belli et pacis" we have completed the list of the predecessors under whose spell he may be said to have fallen.

On returning to Naples he found himself a stranger in a strange land. He was altogether at variance with the thought of his day. He had no sympathy with Descartes or with the experimental scientific methods then in vogue. In a book of this kind a

[1] For a history of Vico's mental development, based largely on his autobiography, see D'Ancona e Bacci " Manuale della letter. ital." III, 644.

detailed account of Vico's theories would be out of place. Those who desire such an account cannot do better than consult Prof. Flint's admirable monograph.[1] He had an extraordinary power of grasping a great principle and applying it in practice, though his knowledge was often defective in detail. He was primarily a jurist, and "made it evident that systems of law are always relative to the general state of society in which, and to the epoch of history at which, they appear; that laws are not made, but grow. . . In the sphere of law Vico reached the generalisation that truth and justice came from God, but that human reason gradually comprehends them, and discovers philosophical law, which is the product and final form of civil law. This generalisation suggested others until Vico perceived that all arts, sciences and ideas had progressed from sense to reason."[2] In fact, he was the first to apply the true historical method to jurisprudence, thus anticipating to a great extent Montesquieu's "Esprit des lois." Unlike other thinkers of the day, he sought his inspiration in the interpretation of the past, and all his work has for its foundation a thorough investigation of the origin of the institutions with which it deals.

But the great discovery of Vico's "new science" was the law of progress and decay through which

[1] "Vico," 1884. Vico's principal works are—

"De nostri temporis studiorum ratione ex linguae Latinae originibus eruenda" (1708).

"De antiquissima Italorum sapientia" (1710).

"De constantia jurisprudentis" (1721).

"Principi di una scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni" (1725): revised and enlarged, in 1730.

[2] Flint's "Vico," p. 45.

all nations, in his view, must pass—the ages of the gods, of heroes and of men—only to begin once more after a period of anarchy in endless rotation, a theory which cannot well be harmonised with the modern doctrine of evolution. He was deeply religious and therefore exempted the Jews, as the chosen people of God, from his law. He attributed the awakening of the religious instinct in primitive man to fear of thunder, for he clearly grasped the fact that in the childhood of a race men were like children and that imagination preceded reason. Mythology was the result of this early imaginative period and he was the first to realise that it is not worthless rubbish, but represents a stage in a nation's development. He was often wrong in his applications, as for instance in his strange idea that the twelve great gods are the successive expressions of a people's awakening conscience, Jupiter standing for the idea of God, Juno for that of marriage, etc., but this hardly affects the value of his "new science" as a whole. Similarly he traces the origin of language from mere signs.

His examination of the Twelve Tables is masterly in its way and it was only after patient investigations that he rejected Roman history before the Punic Wars, thus anticipating Niebuhr's great contribution to historical science. He regards the Homeric poems as the "formations of the genius of a race," and not as the work of an individual, and gives us Wolf's own principles based on Wolf's own grounds.[1] His picture of the Homeric age is

[1] Cp. Flint, p. 173.

remarkable and displays, says Flint, " a combination of critical and constructive power, of sceptical courage and imaginative realisation, of which there had been no previous example in the department of history."

In other ways, also, he was before his age. He was the first to point out the distinction between natural spontaneous poetry and the poetry of reflection, and to realise the importance of the content, as distinct from the form of a work of art. Every work of art is a product of the mind, and therefore, he declares, we cannot properly understand it till we understand the mind that created it. But it is not surprising that his great book, which was written in Italian, unlike his other works, which were written in Latin, was beyond the comprehension even of Apostolo Zeno and that the few who praised it admired its learning rather than the profound philosophic insight of which it is a proof. It was many years before general knowledge had advanced far enough for Vico's real significance to be appreciated, though his contemporaries had a vague idea of his greatness and he was not unhonoured in his day ; and then the investigators in particular branches, armed with more scientific methods and more accurate in their details, such as Wolf, Montesquieu and Niebuhr, reaped the fame that really belongs to the great constructive mind which had already grasped the new tendencies in so many directions and anticipated the lines they were bound to take.

As the century advanced, Italy was more and

more influenced by the new ideas emanating from the great Encyclopædia, two editions of which were published in the peninsula. But in Italy the movement was not so much anti-monarchical as anti-clerical and anti-feudal, and it received the sympathy and support of enlightened rulers like Joseph II of Austria. In Italy, as in France, the Encyclopædia resulted in a great popularisation of science and learning. A lighter and more readable literature for the diffusion of the new ideas replaced the dull, heavy treatises of earlier days. Culture was the fashion, and writers like Algarotti, whose touch was as light as his knowledge was shallow, became the lions of the *salons*. There was Ferdinando Galiani, for instance (1728–87), author of the "Socrate immaginario," whose diplomatic letters throw so interesting a light on the Paris of his day. Political economy was his hobby, and his work upon the corn-trade and his "Della moneta" show considerable knowledge.

More important is Antonio Genovesi (1712–69), who held at Naples the first professorship of political economy established in Europe. In his "Lettere accademiche" and his "Lezioni di commerico" he strongly advocates the claim of education, among women no less than among men, holding, in opposition to Rousseau, that education is bound to increase general happiness. Like Parini and Verri he is practical in his aims and upholds the dignity of labour, especially of agriculture, as the chief source of a nation's wealth. Francesco Maria Pagano (1748–99), who was executed in Naples and was one of the first

victims of the cause of freedom, shows himself to have been a closer student of Vico than of Montesquieu in his "Saggi politici," which consist largely of criticisms and comments on the enlarged edition of the "Scienza nuova."

The most important of these later Neapolitan philosophers is Gaetano Filangeri (1752-88), a man of good family, who captivated everyone, including Goethe, by his charm of manner, and held important official posts, in spite of his youth. His "Scienza della legislazione," the first two volumes of which appeared in 1780, shows the influence of Rousseau, and still more of Montesquieu. Filangeri proposed to deal with every aspect of civilised life in the seven volumes he had planned. He considers the struggle for power the most important element in society. The fourth book on education is probably the most original. He would leave the subject entirely in the hands of the State, which is to give children a higher or a lower education according to its requirements and thus prevent the increase of the useless educated idlers for whom it has no need. The detail with which he works out his system is characteristic of his methods. The fifth book, which was left unfinished and appeared posthumously, would seem to suggest that he even proposed to place religion under state control, and contains views which would certainly have got him into trouble, had he lived. The work has, of course, many faults of detail and the style is distinctly rhetorical; but the author's early death makes it a remarkable achievement as it stands.

We find the same signs of awakening in Milan, where a group of able young men were beginning to advocate the cause of reform. Chief among these was Pietro Verri (1728-97) with whom his younger brother Alessandro afterwards became associated. To escape his father's profession of the law, which he detested, he entered the army and saw some active service with the Austrians. But he soon found he was not made for a soldier, resigned his commission in 1760, and returned to Milan. The patriarchal system of family life in Italy enabled his father, who had no sympathy with his views, to tyrannise over him as long as he lived, and to escape from domestic worries Verri threw himself heart and soul into the study of finance and political economy. Pietro was a born leader and a body of kindred spirits, chief among whom was Cesare Beccaria, soon began to gather at his rooms to discuss the leading questions of the day. They were, of course, bound to form an academy, the "Accademia dei Pugni" (fists), and took their academic names from Roman history. But they soon wished to give more effectual expression to the aggressive views implied by the name of their academy, so in June, 1764, the first number of "Il Caffè" appeared.

A framework was chosen like that of the "Spectator" which, as we shall see, was much admired in Italy. The Caffè is supposed to be kept by a Greek who had settled in Italy after many wanderings, and whose coffee-house had become the meeting-place of all sorts and conditions of men. The paper

professed to report the conversations held there. It was printed at Brescia, in Venetian territory, to escape the censorship.

The "Caffè" was to be thoroughly popular in style and to encourage the average reader to take an interest in the new theories that were springing up abroad, in science, art, trade and, above all, in agriculture, as the chief source of the nation's wealth. Beccaria supplied mathematical articles on such subjects as the calculation of the chances in playing faro on a special system. Though influenced by the Encyclopædists, the writers were neither revolutionary nor irreligious. They rightly condemned the bad taste of Voltaire's attitude towards Christianity and their origin prevented them from holding democratic views, though they advocated reforms in the administration. Pedantry—a rather vague term—is one of their pet aversions and "scire non est reminisci" one of their mottoes. Pietro Verri's articles are generally the most striking. Eight papers in the first volume of the "Caffè" are directed against pedantry, and in one of them Verri satirises his enemies, showing them assembling in the "Tempio dell' ignoranza," which is, of course, Gothic, to symbolise their obscurity. He was a warm advocate of trade and, like Addison in the "Spectator" (No. 69), scouted the idea that it was degrading for a noble to enter it. Parini's sneers at commerce in the "Giorno" are directed against Verri's school and it was not till late in life that these two reformers learnt to appreciate each other. The "Caffè" spoke slightingly of the "Giorno."

The "Caffè" was strongly opposed to the narrow provincialism of the day and one of its best articles is directed against the habit of calling natives of other parts of the peninsula foreigners, for Italy was essentially a single country. Alessandro Verri's famous article on the language, which raised a violent outcry against the friends from every side, shows the same tendency. He roundly maintains that every word in use between Reggio in Calabria and the Alps is Italian and that the agreement of all Italians on a linguistic point outweighs the authority of all the grammarians. This was carrying matters with a rather high hand, and in later years Alessandro considerably modified his views. But style was placed so far above every other consideration by Arcadia that a strong protest was necessary, and, like Parini, Alessandro appears as the champion of content against form. Beccaria had declared that Italian was becoming fixed in immovable bonds and was rapidly acquiring the stiffness of a dead language, and it was certainly time to bring the language into relation with the thought of the day by abolishing otiose adjectives and meaningless expressions. Hence Alessandro Verri inserted a solemn renunciation of the "Crusca," which, he declared, should be pronounced under oath before a notary by all his supporters, as a proof that they were determined to prefer "ideas to words." If by Italianising foreign words they were better able to express their ideas, no authority should prevent them from so doing. It must be admitted, however, that the result was a painful disfiguring of the style

of the six friends with Gallicisms. Beccaria, for instance, unblushingly prints "mateloti" and "cocchetteria" and similar abominations in his most serious works.

The "Caffè" did not stand alone in its attitude to the "Crusca." Even a purist like Baretti resisted its authority, for, while no one denied the excellent service the dictionary had done the language, it was generally blamed for its rigid conservatism and refusal to advance with the needs of the times. Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808) a thorough cosmopolitan, who was steeped in French culture and in his latter years was protected by Napoleon, whom he flattered slavishly, was impatient of all authority in such matters. Of his verse we shall speak elsewhere. In his "Saggio sulla filosofia delle lingue" (1785) he advocates a middle course between academic rules and the caprice or fashion of the hour. He realises that language lives and grows and needs new words to express new ideas and that everyone has a right to reform it according to his needs; but the reforms must be reasonable and judicious, and in accordance with the spirit of the language. In such matters the authority of cultivated men of ability should have more weight than that of grammarians. Custom is to be the guide in the spoken language, but in the written tongue we must be far more severe. He fully recognised the claims of the Tuscan as superior to those of any other dialect, and, great as was the influence of France upon his style, he cannot be accused of advocating the introduction of Gallicisms

into Italian. Unfortunately, he was misunderstood and the advocates of indiscriminate change sheltered themselves behind his authority. The "Essay" gave rise to a considerable controversy. In his "Dell' uso e dei pregi della lingua italiana" (1791) Gianfrancesco Napione, while approving Cesarotti's ideal of a common, living Italian language, strenuously combats his French leanings; but he wishes pure Italian to be taught in the schools, even to the lowest classes, instead of the French and Latin usual in Piedmont, as the surest means of civilising them.

The "Caffè" was discontinued in 1766, when Beccaria and Alessandro Verri went to Paris and Pietro was busy with other work. Though it had never proved a great popular success, it had attracted considerable attention and was praised by d'Alembert and Voltaire. These new ideas may not strike us as very remarkable, but when one remembers the "Giorno" and the idleness, ignorance and superstition that characterised the young men of the upper classes at this time, the "Caffè" was a hopeful sign for the future.

It is, however, as an economist that Pietro Verri is most important. His "Idee sull' indole del piacere e del delore" (1773) has little philosophical value, but his "Dialogo sul disordine delle monete nello stato di Milano" (1762) and a pamphlet on the salt-tax appeared before the "Caffè," while his attacks on the system of farming the taxes (1764) so impressed Kaunitz in Vienna and Firmian, the Plenipotentiary in Milan, that he was made a member of the Committee for the reform of the taxes and then sat

on the council which administered the new system till it was abolished by Joseph II in 1786. But he continued to write on economic subjects. Like Parini, Verri was a warm supporter of Austrian rule, though ready to criticise it when he thought it needed criticism. He considered that excessive restrictions hampered trade and preferred indirect to direct restrictions. "Il mondo va da se," he once declared. In 1796 he was made a member of the council of Milan, like Parini, and continued his active work till he died suddenly at the Municipality. He was essentially a practical man, whose work in the world was of more value than his ideas.

Verri was the exact opposite of his friend Cesare Beccaria (1738-94), who probably owes much of his fame to Pietro, for without the continual encouragement and practical help of the energetic friend, on whom he leant almost entirely in his early life, it is highly improbable that the nervous, retiring mathematician would ever have brought himself to write his famous "Dei delitti e delle pene." This work produced as important results in the world as any that has ever been published. It may be true that its author is indebted to the French humanitarians for many of his ideas. He always declared that the reading of Montesquieu's "Lettres persanes" marked the turning-point in his life. But his little book, written in two months in the Palazzo Verri, largely as the result of the conversations of the "Pugni," made the first definite appeal for the abolition of torture and reform in criminal legislation. Appearing just at the right moment,

it gave the necessary impetus to the tendencies of the age. Austria and Tuscany abolished torture at once and other countries soon followed. Beccaria was even opposed to the death-penalty, which he regarded as less terrible and less effective as a deterrent than imprisonment for life. The fact that the book is more sentimental than scientific, which doubtless did much to make it effective in its own day, detracts from its permanent value. But it made Beccaria the lion of the Paris *salons*, till the strain was too much for his nerves and obliged him to return to Turin. The trip caused a misunderstanding between Beccaria and the Verris, in which both sides were probably to blame, but many years later the breach was healed and they died friends. Beccaria's "Ricerche intorno alla natura dello stile," lectures delivered in his capacity of Professor, show considerable knowledge of the subject, but unfortunately the style is so clumsy and obscure that, according to Baretti, they could only be understood by the "dark brain" of a Count Verri.

Another instance of the intellectual vigour and independence that characterised Naples in the early part of the century is Pietro Giannone (1676-1748), whose "Storia del regno di Napoli" (1723) raised such an outcry that he was compelled to take refuge in Vienna. His book is not a history in the ordinary sense of being a chronological record of facts, for it deals rather with laws, customs and institutions—in short, with "everything that concerns the nature of government, whether political, temporal, ecclesiastical or spiritual,"—from the Roman period

to his own day. But his chief object was to show how, owing to human fear and the concessions of princes, the clerical power had "succeeded in vesting so much authority in the bishops and the Curia that they had obtained almost entire control of every royal prerogative and had dislocated the balance and violated the original unity which made even religion a means for the preservation of the state."[1] Giannone made no pretence to original investigation. He took most of his facts at second-hand, and, of course, his anti-clerical bias is manifest. But in spite of this, his case was so strong that his History became immensely popular as the first important attempt to voice the anti-clerical tendencies of the age. Accused of attacks on monks and nuns and of not respecting the miracle of S. Januarius, he was even hustled in the streets of Naples. But he was welcomed in Vienna, where he wrote the "Triregno," an account of the earthly, heavenly and papal kingdoms which shows that he had not changed his views. In 1734 he returned to Italy in the vain hope of being allowed to settle in Naples by the new Bourbon king. After various wanderings, he was treacherously inveigled into Piedmont on the pretext of celebrating Easter there in 1736 and imprisoned in the castle of Turin. A false promise of liberty encouraged him solemnly to recant his opinions, but he died a martyr to the cause of freedom of thought in 1748.

In Italy the eighteenth century produced great men of learning rather than great historians, and the

[1] Bk. I, c. 7; quoted by Concari.

chief of these was, of course, Lodovico Muratori, a native of Vignola (1672-1750). His parents were poor, but learning was highly esteemed at this time and the interpretation of an inscription was enough to make a man famous. The printing of some unpublished documents in Mediæval Latin brought Muratori to the notice of Magliabechi, among others, and his abilities were soon recognised. He was summoned to Milan, where he was first made a Professor in the Ambrosian College, and afterwards Prefect of the Ambrosian library. In 1700 he went to Modena as librarian and archivist and remained there for the rest of his life. Though genuinely religious, Muratori was no clerical and when, in 1708, a quarrel broke out between the Pope and the d'Este family for the possession of Comacchio, he vigorously defended his patron's rights with all the wealth of his learning in his " Antichità Estensi," the two parts of which appeared in 1717 and 1740 respectively. The fanatical Fontanini, author of the " Ragionamento della eloquenza italiana " (1723), was the Papal champion. Muratori did not spare the priests in his historical investigations and superstition and theatrical ceremonies roused his indignation almost as much as unbelief itself.

It was not long, however, before Muratori found his true vocation. Apostolo Zeno had projected an edition of the principal sources of Italian Mediæval history and had even taken some steps towards the execution of his plan, but the Pope would give him no help and he was obliged to abandon the idea. Muratori, supported by Filippo Argelati,

an influential bookseller in Modena, succeeded in interesting the entire learned world of Italy in his design. The "Società Palatina," consisting of nobles and men of learning, was formed in Milan to undertake the work and a press with special type was established in the royal palace there. In 1723 appeared the first volume of the "Rerum italicorum scriptores," and in 1751 the last. The chronicles, decrees, poems, statutes and inscriptions which it contains came from all over the country, and were carefully edited by competent scholars, who ransacked the libraries for materials. The highest in the land helped and Muratori's correspondence with his contributors would make a memorable life-work for an ordinary man. Later research has naturally discovered weak spots in the collection, but it was the first attempt to bring together the materials for the history of a whole nation and it can never be entirely superseded. Pertz's great work is the only one that can be compared with it.

Between 1738 and 1743 appeared the "Antiquitates medii aevi," drawn from a vast mass of material. Then Muratori turned his attention to compiling the "Annali d'Italia" in Italian, continuing then to the year 1749. The style, like the matter, is bald and simple, with no attempt at ornament, and the book hardly takes high rank as literature, though, like everything which Muratori undertook, it is a monument of learning. But he found time for much besides. He wrote Arcadian verse and a treatise "Della perfetta poesia," which we shall discuss

elsewhere. The practical character of his religion is proved by his "Carità Cristiana," and the "Compagnia della carità," which he founded for the relief of the distressed. His "Del governo della peste," a treatise on the plague, was even translated into English; and he was the author of an elaborate life of Castelvetro. Indeed, the work he accomplished was stupendous. The President de Brosses describes how he found him, in his old age, "avec ses quatre cheveux," working bare-headed, with no fire, in the freezing cold of the library at Modena. No man of learning since the Renaissance has left so indelible a mark on his successors as Muratori. At one stroke he not only founded, but almost perfected the study of the middle ages and modern scientific investigation dates from his day.

Muratori left nothing for his successors to do but to fill in the details, and the latter half of the century is rich in local histories, inspired by strong local patriotism, such as Giulini's monumental work on Milan or Affò's on Parma. They are mere learned compilations with no pretence to literary merits. In opposition to this tendency, we find the more philosophic history, of which Voltaire, Hume and Robertson were the masters, adopted by a number of writers who endeavour to interpret and arrange in more popular form the facts so diligently collected by Muratori's disciples. Pietro Verri's "Storia di Milano" (1783-98), only one copy of which is said to have been sold, belongs to this class of history, which strongly attracted the literary adventurer of the day, who was at home in every

capital of Europe and looked chiefly to Paris or to Ferney for his inspiration. Bettinelli's "Risorgimento d'Italia dopo il Mille" (1773) is a history of literature, art, manners and trade, sketched in broad outline, and freely sprinkled with generalisations of a more or less philosophical character, and it was deservedly successful. Carlo Denina (1731-1813) is probably the best of these writers. Always in difficulties with the ecclesiastical authorities at home, he gladly accepted Frederic the Great's invitation to Berlin, where he could enjoy full liberty. He wrote French as easily as Italian, and Napoleon's invasion of his native Piedmont drew from him a dedication to the conqueror, for which he was rewarded with a librarianship in Paris. He was no blind worshipper at the shrine of Ferney and a well-reasoned condemnation of the "Henriade" by a writer so anti-clerical caused Voltaire considerable annoyance. Denina also criticised Montesquieu. He was a prolific compiler, and his works were widely read. His "Discorso sopra le vincende della letteratura," suffers from his ignorance of foreign literatures and his claim to recognition rests chiefly on his "Rivoluzioni d'Italia" (1769-70), which was translated into every civilised tongue and was reprinted as late as 1842. It is really a history of Italy from the earliest times to the Peace of Utrecht. Denina is absolute master of his material, which is well arranged, and he tells his story in a simple, lively style. He deserves credit for treating Italy as a whole and not piecemeal as most other historians had hitherto done.

CHAPTER IV

GOLDONI AND ITALIAN COMEDY

ITALY owes her drama, if nothing else, to the eighteenth century. Metastasio, Alfieri and Goldoni hardly rank among the world's greatest dramatists, but in their hands Italian opera, comedy, and tragedy reached their zenith. Before Carlo Goldoni (1707–1793) Italy possessed no national comedy.[1] On the one hand, there was the old Mask Comedy, the "Commedia dell'arte" or "Comedy of the Guild," for 'arte" here bears the same meaning as in early Italian history—the professional comedy, in fact, of Harlequin, Brighella, Tartaglia and Pantaloon, and the variations of these four original masks. It was largely improvised. As a rule, the actors were provided with nothing but a scenario and they filled in the dialogue themselves. This Mask Comedy culminated in the sixteenth century and was now rapidly on the decline. But it was very popular, though its licence roused the ire of the moralists. Even educated people like Stendhal habitually mingled with the crowds round the booths where it was performed and companies of Italian comedians were still maintained in the principal European capitals.

[1] For comedy, see Concari, c. III; Landau, II, 1 and 2; "Vernon Lee," pp. 353-457; F. de Sanctis, "Storia della letter. ital." c. 19.

In contrast with this was a conventional written comedy, which had hardly any connection with real life and abounded in the wearisome conceits and puns and affectations that were the delight of the Academies. These comedies were usually played in the grounds or the hall of some magnificent villa, often by amateurs, to relieve the monotony of an autumn "villeggiatura." They contain the first attempt to build up a comedy of manners, largely in imitation of Molière, who was greatly admired by cultivated people in Italy, in opposition to the vulgarities of the Commedia dell'arte and the extravagances of Spanish comedy, which was very popular at Naples. They paved the way for Goldoni's reforms.[1] The best of the writers of such comedies were the Florentine Giambattista Fagiuoli and the two Sienese, Girolamo Gigli and Jacopo Nelli. Fagiuoli wrote in pure Tuscan. His plots are slight and commonplace, but his characters are drawn from life and his "Il vero amore non cura interesse" gives an admirable picture of real peasant love with no Arcadian conventionalities. Even Baretti, who denies him ninety-nine per cent. of the qualities of a poet, admits that he can write an entertaining play. Gigli's "Don Pilone," an imitation of "Tartuffe," is an attack on the religious hypocrisy so prevalent in Tuscany under Cosimo III. It was brought out at Lucca in 1711, when the poet and his friends played the principal parts. Its great success was largely due to the personal satire with which it abounds. It seems terribly

[1] For these writers, see especially Landau, Pt. II, c. I.

exaggerated and heavy after Molière. The continuation, "La sorellina di Don Pilone," is better and more original. Nelli's comedies are concerned almost entirely with the middle classes, but his satire is less pointed than Gigli's. His love scenes show a genuine feeling rare at this time. "La Serva Padrona" is his best play.

These writers anticipated Goldoni in abandoning the mask, but as their plays were merely the product of a drawing-room atmosphere and made no attempt to appeal to the general public, their reforms had no real significance. Their work had no more chance of success on the regular stage than the old classical comedy. The heroic attempt of the famous actor, Riccoboni to revive Ariosto's "Scolastica" had proved this to be wholly unsuitable to a modern audience. Someone was wanted to graft the living comedy of Harlequin and Pantaloon upon the traditional comedy of manners and produce a national comedy that would appeal to plebeian and patrician alike.

The man was found in Carlo Goldoni, who was born at Venice in 1707, and whose life, as described by himself in his fascinating memoirs, was as varied and full of adventure as the best of his plays. From the first it is dominated by the theatre. When four years old he delighted in the marionettes which his father worked for him. He was extraordinarily precocious and while still little more than a baby, he read a number of comedies, in which the family library abounded, and at eight years old wrote one himself, the very name of which has perished.

Soon after this he was sent to join his father, who was a doctor of medicine in Perugia. Here he did well at school and played a lady's part in a production of Gigli's " Sorellina di Don Pilone," which his father arranged for the boy's amusement. Then he was sent to school at Rimini, but ran away with a company of strolling players who were going to Chioggia, where his family had now settled, and where he was received with open arms by his mother. As he had no taste for medicine, the law was to be his profession, and he was sent to study first at Venice, then at the Collegio Ghisleri at Pavia (1723) whence he was soon expelled on account of a satire on the ladies of the town. In a fit of depression he actually thought, at one time, of entering a monastery. But Goldoni could never be long depressed. He was of a quiet, cheerful, even, contented disposition, taking life just as it came, always looking on the bright, and above all on the comic side of things, with the result that virtually all his adventures are comic in character.

He next obtained a post in the courts at Chioggia. Here he gained the knowledge of the fishermen of the island which he was afterwards to use with such effect in " Le barufe Chiozote," by many considered his best play. From thence he went to Feltre, but his passion for the theatre had not diminished, and we find him acting and even writing little comedies for amateurs. On his father's death, in 1731, he settled down to the law in earnest and took his degree at Padua. But he had not changed, and we find him writing a music-drama which

was declined in Milan and which he actually had the pluck to burn (1733.) He then accepted a post under the Venetian ambassador at Milan, but in the following year returned to Venice, where his first successful effort, "Belisario," a music-drama, was given by the Imer company at the S. Samuele theatre. In 1736 he married, and the story of his courtship might have come straight from one of his own comedies. The marriage, though childless, was ideally happy, and his wife proved to be his guardian angel during his long life. From 1741-1744 he was Genoese consul at Venice, but the position involved him in such difficulties that he was glad to migrate to Pisa, where he practised in the courts. Here he was found in 1748 by Medebac, the famous manager of the S. Angelo theatre at Venice, and was at last induced to return to his native town to write comedies for Medebac's company at a yearly salary of 400 ducats.

We have anticipated strict chronology in order to deal with Goldoni's dramatic work as a whole. The year 1748 is an important date in the history of Italian literature as well as in Goldoni's life. It is the year of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which freed the long-suffering country from war for a considerable period, and, with the exception of Lombardy and the Duchy of Mantua, which were in Austrian hands, placed it once more under Italian rulers. Literature now enters into closer and closer contact with actual life instead of being regarded as an ideal place of refuge from the miseries of this world. In fact, so far as it is possible to give

a precise date, 1748 is the year in which modern Italian literature is generally considered to have commenced, and though Goldoni was hardly influenced at all by the new doctrines that were slowly gaining ground, he is thoroughly modern in his realism, and in his determination to go to life itself for his inspiration. He therefore deserves to rank among the pioneers of the reviving literature of his country.

Goldoni followed his first successful opera, with other tragedies and tragi-comedies on the old lines. Not till 1738 did he venture to make innovations. He realised that the " commedia dell'arte " was the only comedy really alive, and that in a reform of this lay the one hope for something better. At first he did not even try to abolish the principal masks, and in his " Momolo Cortesan " he wrote only the part for the title-rôle, leaving the actors to improvise the others as usual. In 1743 appeared " La donna di garbo," his first attempt at a real comedy ; but even here the variety of characters represented by the leading lady and their truth to life is the only innovation. His great gifts remained unknown till he began to work for Medebac. Then he gradually relegated the masks of Brighella and Arlecchino to the subordinate position of servants till in the end he could dispense with them altogether. For Pantalone dei Bisognosi, the typical Venetian father, Goldoni had a genuine affection ; but even he gradually disappeared. The interest now centred round the two lovers, who had formerly been utterly unimportant in the plot, instead of round the

old masks; and the triumph of the new school was assured when Pantalone could appear successfully without his mask.

The "Putta Onorata," which describes the resistance offered by a thoroughly honest girl to the temptations of rich admirers, was his first typical comedy, and its success encouraged him to produce with extraordinary rapidity the long series of plays describing the everyday life of the period which have made him famous. For the absurdities of the mask-comedy he substituted "simple, direct comic action, unshackled by academic rules and prejudices, but imitating nature itself." It was on the support of the people, brought up on Harlequin and Pantaloon, that he depended for success. He had no royal or noble patron. He could not have satirised the patricians of Venice had he wished to do so, for to offend the governing classes meant ruin. A pure comedy of manners was out of the question. He must confine himself to the middle and lower classes, if he wished to have a free hand, and luckily these were the classes he knew best. He was not imaginative. He had no high ideals or ruling passions. Vice and even crime amused him instead of rousing his indignation, for he was kindly and tolerant of all men. He was too clear-sighted not to know his own value and his own limitations. "If I possessed Molière's wit," he says in the dedication of the 'Famiglia del antiquario," "as I possess his skill, I would do for my country what he has done for his."

His best work appeared between 1748 and 1760

when he was wholly occupied in painting the Italian life, and above all the Venetian life of his own day. In 1750 the failure of the " Erede Fortunato " and the loss of a good actor threatened disaster to the company, when on the last day of Carnival Goldoni promised his audience to produce sixteen comedies within, the year and he fulfilled his promise to the day. The supporters of the old mask comedy were his chief enemies and he began with a clever attack on them in the " Teatro comico," which is full of interesting information on the subject. This was followed by the delightful " Pettegolezze delle donne," which doubled the prices of the boxes. Many of the plays were, of course, hastily put together, and poor in quality, but the " Bottega del caffè," one of his very best, and the " Famiglia del antiquario " both belong to this year.

In the following year he quarrelled with Medebac and signed a contract with the patrician Vendramin to write eight comedies a year for the S. Luca theatre. He had been ill for a short time after his astonishing feat for the S. Angelo, but in 1751 appeared " La Locandiera," which has probably been the most popular of all his plays and still finds a place in the repertoire of every leading Italian actress. Vendramin proved a hard taskmaster. He conducted his theatre on strict business principles and exacted absolute obedience from his subordinates, not excepting Goldoni. During his engagement Goldoni wrote him some sixty comedies, among which, besides " La Locandiera," we find the " Villegiatura " triology, giving an admirable picture of

one of the most characteristic sides of Italian life of the period, and his two best plays in Venetian dialect, the "Barufe Chiozote," a most amusing account of a quarrel among the fisher-folk at Chioggia and its consequences, and "I Rusteghi," which shows us three brutal, overbearing boors utterly outwitted by a clever woman.

The attacks of Goldoni's enemies were now proving more effective. Chief among these was the elegant abate Pietro Chiari (1711-1785), who appears to have made it his mission in life to endeavour to outstrip everyone in the line in which they were generally considered most successful. Baretti laughed at his "Lettere filosofiche" (1755) imitating Pope's "Essay on Man." Chiari was not without ability and had ideas of his own. He was one of the few Italians to write novels at this time, and, though poor, they were exceedingly popular.[1] He advocates the rights of children against their parents, and the story of Pietro Verri's life shows that they had a genuine grievance. If not exactly an advocate of women's suffrage, he at least wished them to have some share in public affairs. He was, moreover, the author of essays and learned works, and at one time edited the "Gazzetta Veneta," which Gasparo Gozzi raised to such high excellence.

But Chiari is best known as a playwright. Carlo Gozzi, who hated him, says that his plots have all an astrologer's obscurity, and that his leaps rival

[1] For an account of one of these wildly extravagant tales, see Concari, p. 398; and for the novelists of the day, Albertazzi, "Il Romanzo," Pt. II, c. 2.

those of the seven league boots. He admits that he sometimes gives us a good theatrical surprise and a foolishly happy[1] description, but considers him the most turgid, inflated writer of the century. Chiari succeeded Goldoni at the S. Angelo theatre, and at once vented his jealousy by every kind of attack. Goldoni wrote " Pamela nubile "—Richardson was already popular in Italy—Chiari replied with " Pamela maritata " : the " Avventuriere onorato " called forth Chiari's " Avventuriere alla moda," and so on in endless succession. Unfortunately this rivalry forced Goldoni to abandon comedy and court popular taste by writing plays on subjects entirely out of his range, such as the " Sposa persiana," or even in verse. We must not blame him for this. Vendramin meant his theatre to pay, and had Goldoni failed to produce what the public wanted he would have been instantly dismissed. Yet, in spite of his enemy's greater imagination, Goldoni could hold his own even here, while in purely Venetian comedies Chiari was hopelessly outclassed. Chiari's verse is painfully wooden and the dénouements of his plays are invariably poor. His work has none of the extraordinary naturalness and ease which characterises a comedy by Goldoni from the very first scene and makes it difficult to realise that the plot has been constructed and that it has not grown of itself out of the characters and circumstances. Moreover, Chiari made no attempt to carry out the theories he at times professed in his work and he was entirely without ideals. This

[1] Bestialmente felice.

theatrical duel was the sensation of the hour in frivolous Venice, and the whole town was divided into Chiaristi and Goldonisti, especially in the year 1754, when the question was discussed even in the churches and the convents and monasteries. The sentimental Chiari, however, had the ladies' sympathy. Always good-natured, Goldoni refused to lose his temper and contented himself with satirising his rival as Crisologo, a foolish imitator of Shakespeare or "Sachespar," as he calls him, in the "Malcontenti." Time has fully justified Goldoni and relegated Chiari to a well-merited obscurity.

But Goldoni encountered far more formidable opposition from the famous academy of the Granelleschi, which had been formed by the leading men of letters in Venice, to encourage good taste and promote a proper respect for the great writers of the Cinquecento. The Gozzi brothers were the moving spirits of the Academy. Gasparo, indeed, highly praised Goldoni's "Rusteghi" in the "Gazzetta Veneta," and spoke with contempt of Chiari, but his eccentric brother Carlo (1720-1806), conceived a violent hatred for both the rivals for threatrical pre-eminence. He opened a campaign against them with "Tartana degli influssi per l'anno bissestile, 1756," a comic almanac in *terzine* and other metres. This was followed by "Marfisa bizzarra," an amusing satirical poem where the heroine goes into a decline from reading Chiari's novels, and by a number of similar productions for which Gozzi had a natural gift. Chiari he utterly despises. He blames Goldoni for the slightness

of his plots, for his recognition of the heroic qualities of the lower classes at the expense of the patricians, whom he treats with no great respect, as is only natural in eighteenth century Venice, and above all for his style. Gozzi admits, however, that Goldoni is true to nature and that every one of his plays contains some good comic passage. But Goldoni could point to the box-office receipts and laugh at these ineffectual attacks.

Then one day, according to Baretti, Goldoni and Gozzi met at a bookseller's, for booksellers' shops were the favourite resorts of men of letters in Venice at this time. In the course of a discussion Gozzi declared that any novelty would please the people for a while and undertook to draw large audiences to a play on the old nursery story of " L'amore delle tre melarance." He was as good as his word and the play was enthusiastically received at the S. Samuele theatre in January, 1761. It satirises the Goldoni-Chiari duel in the quarrels between Celio Mago and Fata Morgante, and the old masks, always dear to Carlo Gozzi, reappear, with every kind of weird magic and transformation, interspersed with allusions to everyday life. The result must have been strangely like a modern pantomime, except that the book was the work of a man of real literary ability. In his later " fiabe," as they were called, Gozzi endeavours to uphold his thesis that " any rubbish is good enough to attract the people to the theatre. Imagination and style will give an air of distinction to any subject, however childish." Henceforth only the four chief masks

improvised their parts: the rest Gozzi wrote himself. In fact, like Goldoni, he started with the " Commedia dell'arte," with which he proposed to combine the marvellous and supernatural element and to oppose the result to Goldoni's realistic comedy. But even in this early struggle romanticism was destined to succumb to realism, as it always has done in Italy. As long as the famous Truffaldino Sacchi[1] remained with the S. Samuele company, Gozzi's fairy plays were the rage. So powerful was he that his attack on Gratarol, his rival with the beautiful actress La Ricci, as Adone in the " Droghe d'amore " drove him from Venice. Baretti, an ardent Granellesco and a hater of Goldoni and all his ways, at first considered Gozzi a great genius and regretted that Garrick had not seen his plays when in Italy; but even Baretti changed his views when they were published some years later. After 1765 they sank into an oblivion from which nothing is likely to rescue them in Italy, and Carlo Gozzi is now chiefly remembered for his delightful, whimsical " Memorie inutili," which rank with those of Goldoni, Casanova and Da Ponte as among the best of the eighteenth century. In Germany, however, the home of romanticism, the fate of these fairy-plays has been very different. Hoffmann imitated them and Schiller himself translated " Turandot " for the Weimar theatre.

But Carlo Gozzi gained his point. Disgusted with these attacks and with Vendramin's tyranny,

[1] So called because he was the inventor of the Mask Truffaldino, a modification of Arlecchino.

Goldoni accepted the post of manager of the Italian theatre in Paris, and in 1762 bade farewell to his native city in " Una delle ultime sere di Carnevale." [1]

The audience rose, shouting, " Addio, Goldoni ! Arrivederci presto ! " But he was never to return. In Paris he found the company was accustomed to the " Commedia dell'arte," and he was obliged to write skeleton plays on the old lines. So poor was the acting, or so unused to real Italian comedy the audience, that even the " Ventaglio," an admirable play, was a failure, and it was only his appointment as teacher to the French princesses that kept Goldoni in France at all. In 1768 he was pensioned, and it was then that he wrote the "Bourru bienfaisant," one of the best of his comedies, in French. It had a triumphant success at the Comédie Française and was played in honour of the marriage of Marie Antoinette. Yet Madame Du Deffand told Horace Walpole that it was " la pièce la plus froide, la plus plate qui a paru de nos jours."

Goldoni was prosaic and matter of fact, genial and tolerant. His highest ambition was to give a picture of the life of his day, especially in Venice, exactly as he saw it. He was no satirist. His keen sense of humour made the world as it was, with all its extravagances, inconsistencies and even vices, so amusing in his eyes that he had no wish to

[1] The speech is put into the mouth of a Venetian merchant leaving for Russia, and is in the dialect " No xe questa la prima volta che vago, e sempre, dove sono stà, ho portà el nome di Venezia scolpio nel cor . . . Co son tornà me xe stà sempre consolazion. . . Conserverme el vostro amor, cari amici, el cielo ve benedissa, ve lo digo de cor."

reform it. Nor was he a profound philosopher, plumbing the depths of character. He caught character as it showed itself in action without seeking for the springs that move it. Had he attempted more he could never have been the author of some 250 plays and scenarios. Yet he considered that character was the foundation of all good comedy. His personages are not passionate, for passion was not a characteristic either of Goldoni or of the age in which he lived. His girls are anxious to get married, but they do not expect to marry the man of their choice. Their husbands were chosen for them, often after long haggling over the dowry, and betrothal was a solemn contract which it was a disgrace to repudiate, so that Giacinta in the " Villeggiatura " plays is looked upon as a heroine for sacrificing her love to her duty.

Goldoni belonged to the middle classes and had little sympathy with the nobility. He avoids describing them as much as possible, and they are always the most artificial people in his plays. He was bound to show them some respect, however, and he yielded to popular prejudice by giving Pamela a noble father. All his admiration was reserved for the old merchant class which had made Venice great, though it had almost disappeared by the eighteenth century, and Pantalone dei Bisognosi, the typical old-fashioned Venetian father, was his ideal. Into his mouth Goldoni puts his shrewdest criticisms of the corruption of the day. Of course, Pantalone talks in dialect, but he is dignified, self-respecting and proud of the class to which he

belongs. In "Le donne puntigliose" he has nothing but contempt for the young couple who will submit to any humiliation to obtain an entry into a higher social sphere, where they are only despised. Pantalone is, in Goldoni's eyes, all that remains of that thrifty, healthy, rather narrowly patriotic conservatism which is the backbone of every country.

It would be impossible to mention more than a fraction of the characters that pass across Goldoni's stage in the hundred or more plays which deal with the life of his day. The witty, lively, honest Mirandolina, the "Locandiera," with the two noble admirers whom she ends by rejecting in order to marry her faithful steward, Fabrizio, is one of the most familiar. Then there is Don Marzio, the mischief-making gossip in the "Bottega del Caffè," who may be compared with the parasite Ferdinando of the Villeggiatura plays. Geronte in the "Burbero benefico" (Bourru bienfaisant) and Cristofolo in the "Casa Nuova," are different varieties of the mixture of roughness and good-nature in the same character, while the Rusteghi are a really remarkable family of bullies, who make the lives of their wives and daughters a burden to them till they meet more than their match in Felice. There is hardly an aspect of Venetian life that Goldoni fails to show us. The Villeggiatura plays take us into those beautiful country houses, now often deserted, where life was so much more elaborate than in town and where the ambition not to be outdone in display on the autumn

holiday brought ruin on many a family, as we learn from the satirists of the day. The " cicisbeo " appears in " La dama prudente," the " Cavaliere e la dama," the " Famiglia del antiquario " and in numerous other plays, while there is a whole gallery of young people, for in Goldoni these latter are not merely conventional, but distinct individuals. Nor is he content to show us only the better classes. Bettina, in the " Putta onorata," is a splendid specimen of the woman of the people at her best ; and Goldoni's love for the gondoliers, which drew down upon him Baretti's wrath, is shown in the immortal Menego Cainello. But the best of the dialect plays is certainly " Le barufe chiozote," for he knew Chioggia through and through, and doubtless the long-suffering " Cogitore," who at last succeeds in setting all things right, is more or less Goldoni himself.

The merest trifle suggested a play to his fertile brain. He draws upon older writers, as in the " Buggiardo," founded on Corneille's " Menteur," or upon his own experience, as in " Gli innamorati," or in " L'avventuriere onorato," or upon an incident that had arrested his attention. Then, in a few strokes, he starts the story. You are interested at once and the plot develops as if of itself. He is at his best in street scenes, as in the " Bottega del Caffè " or " Il Ventaglio," where the life and bustle were exactly suited to his mixed and uncritical audience, brought up on the " Commedia dell'arte." Only a few of his patrons were cultivated, like those of Molière, and capable of appreciating real wit.

The majority were uneducated and it was these whom he had to please. And he succeeded, though he abolished the innuendos and the licence of earlier days. The " Vedova scaltra " was performed upwards of thirty times, and the " Putta onorata " and the " Cavaliere e la dama " nearly as often.

There are faint signs of coming changes even in Goldoni, who had a real sympathy with the working classes. He feels for their misfortunes and would like to see them relieved, as we gather from the " Famiglia del antiquario." Pantalone's indignation at the beating of innocent servants in order to insult their masters certainly expresses Goldoni's own view ;[1] and he evidently admires the sturdy independence of the fishermen in " Le barufe chiozote " or of Pantalone in the " Putta onorata," when he bids the worthless Marchese mind his own business.[2] In fact, the voice of the people is beginning to make itself heard and Goldoni's gospel is probably to be found in Felice's remark at the end of " I rusteghi," " Give orders, but don't play the tyrant, and love others if you want to be loved."[3] Yet de Marchi is right in saying that it was Figaro, not Pantalone, who pulled the string of the guillotine, for Pantalone belongs to the middle classes but in Figaro Beaumarchais goes a step further than Goldoni.

Goldoni's rich, lively, varied style has often been attacked by purists and was the special butt

[1] " Le donne puntigliose," III, 4.
[2] " La vaga a comandar en tel so marchesato."
[3] " Comandè, no tirannagiè, e amè se volè esser amai."

of Carlo Gozzi and the Granelleschi. While admitting that it is far from pure,[1] Goldoni declares in one of his prefaces that he is not a member of the Cruscan Academy, but a comic dramatist who wishes to be intelligible in Tuscany, Lombardy, and above all in Venice. "All the world can understand my Italian style, and as comedy represents people speaking, not writing, I have used the style that is most common to the Italian language as a whole." And it certainly answered its purpose. In 1744 Goldoni had even made a long stay in Florence and Siena in order to learn pure Tuscan, and though he failed to do so he has written Venetian as no one else has ever done. "My style is meant to suit comedy, and is simple and natural, not academic or superior. The secret of the art of a writer of comedies is to cling to nature and never to leave her." But it must be admitted that his language is more suited to the lower than to the upper classes. "Though simple and natural, it is often inappropriate, involved, and uncouth."

Towards the end of his life Goldoni wrote his delightful memoirs, like his "Bourru bienfaisant," in French, of which he was now a complete master. Indeed, it is said that his later plays in Italian contain numerous Gallicisms. The memoirs are not always strictly accurate, as was only to be expected, and though they were continued to within two years of the Revolution, there is again no trace of the upheaval which was impending and which was to deprive Goldoni of his pension

[1] "Bassissimo."

and leave him in great distress. He died in Paris on February 7th, 1793, the day before his pension was restored to him by the Convention in accordance with a motion brought forward by André Chénier's brother; but his widow lived to enjoy a portion of it.

Goldoni had no successor. "I have nothing left but a sound digestion and a sensitive heart," he wrote in his old age; and this sensibility, which left its traces on Goldoni's own later work, gradually became the dominant note on the stage. Count Francesco Albergati (1728-1804) a wealthy nobleman, of Bologna, the owner of a private theatre, won a prize offered by the Duke of Parma and Du Tillot with a poor play, "Il prigionere." He is not to be compared with Goldoni for dramatic craftsmanship or for breadth of sympathy. He usually writes with a purpose. "I pregiudizi del falso onore" is an attack on duelling, and "Il ciarlatore maldicente" on the male sopranos in the churches. "Le Convulsioni," an amusing satire on the caprices of the ladies of his day, is his best play. Gherardo de' Rossi (1754-1827) a wealthy, cultivated banker, could delineate character, but his dialogue is poor, he has no gift for comedy, and he is defective in construction. Giovanni Giraud (1776-1834) alone can be said to have carried on to some extent the traditions of the full, bustling, bright Goldonian comedy, drawn directly from life itself.

CHAPTER V

LITERARY CRITICISM AND HISTORY

In spite of the poor results produced by the practice of poetry during the eighteenth century, many of the ablest minds in Italy busied themselves with the theory and the history of the art. They were, as a rule, thoroughly in sympathy with the tendencies of their day.[1] Thus Muratori's "Della perfetta poesia" (1706), the earliest and one of the most important of these treatises, is dominated entirely by Aristotle and Horace and the old classical traditions. For Ariosto and the romantic epic he has scant respect, and for Homer, even less. He admires Dante, but, like most of his contemporaries, blames the excessive scholastic learning and the frequent obscurity of the "Divina Commedia." He considers it inferior to Dante's lyrics which again he ranks far below those of Petrarch. Muratori regards the Cinquecento as the golden age of Italian poetry, and hopes to see it revived in Arcadia, of which he was an enthusiastic admirer. His plea for a return to satire and to moral and didactic poems in place of love lyrics shows how completely he embodied the taste of the eighteenth century.

Gravina's "Ragion poetica" (1708) contains some original ideas. He distinguishes the elements common to all poetry from those that are the result of

[1] For this chapter see Concari, c. IV, V and IX; Landau, Pt. I.

national character or of the age in which the poet lives. Hence he maintains that Aristotle's rules cannot be applied absolutely to modern literature. But he out-Aristotles Aristotle in the strictness of some of his own canons. Homer he places above all other poets, and his admiration for Dante, to whom he devotes several chapters, is genuine. But the cloven hoof appears in his strange enthusiasm for Trissino. As for tragedy, he holds that we should not go to Aristotle, but to the tragic poets themselves for our rules, and he has a proper contempt for the Italian tragedy of his day. Unfortunately, the terrible tragedies which he printed as specimens of how tragedy should be written spoilt all the effects of his theories and delivered him into the hands of his enemies.

Guilio Cesare Becelli, of Verona, points out, in his " Della novella poesia " that tragedy on the old lines, since it corresponds to nothing in modern life, was doomed to failure. Like Gravina, he admired Dante, but he considered him to be far from perfect, and hoped that Italian poetry would ultimately advance far beyond him. This growing interest in the great Tuscan, for all its limitations, is one of the most hopeful signs of the coming revival. Appreciation of Dante in Italy, like that of Shakespeare in England, is the surest test of the healthiness of the taste of the day.

From literary critics proper we turn to the general men of letters who were so characteristic of Italy at this time and of whom Francesco Algarotti (1712-64) is one of the most important. Thoroughly

cosmopolitan, he had travelled in England, France, Russia and Germany, where his charm of manner made him everywhere welcome. He enjoyed the friendship of Voltaire and of Frederic the Great, at whose court he passed several years. He was by the young king's side on the day of his coronation, and was made a Count and a member of the Order of Merit. For England and the English constitution, and even for " smoky London," he had considerable affection, but no honours could shake his love for Italy, whither he returned when his health began to fail. He wrote on every kind of subject, both in prose and verse, in a popular manner, but his knowledge is always superficial, and he adds nothing of his own to the information he retails. His " Lettere sulla Russia " (1739), an interesting description of that country and of the court of Catherine II, which he had visited with Lord Baltimore, are probably his best work. His " Dialoghi sopra l'ottica Newtoniana " (1737), which was earlier than Madame du Châtelet's work, was very popular and was translated into English by Johnson's friend, Elizabeth Carter, of Epictetus fame. It gives a good idea of the level of Algarotti's culture, for he was little more than a popular, pleasure-loving drawing-room abate, petted by the ladies wherever he went, whose work has long ceased to have any importance except to the specialist. But he had a proper contempt for the puerilities of Arcadia and regretted the absence of a living Italian prose in his day. Algarotti was one of the three contributors to Bettinelli's famous collection of blank

verse, which, however, he at once disavowed, declaring his allegiance to the great poet attacked in the " Lettere Virgiliane."

Saverio Bettinelli's long life (1718-1818), which made him a contemporary of Pope on the one hand, and of Byron on the other, enabled him to witness the complete eclipse of his own fame. He was another of the facile, graceful, superficial, cosmopolitan writers, ready to turn their hands to almost any subject, who looked up to Voltaire as their leader. He was a Jesuit, witty and popular in the *salons*, and he spent most of his life teaching in Mantua and other places. His works fill twenty-four volumes. His best performance is certainly " Il risorgimento negli studi, nelle arti e nei costumi dopo il mille," which is not so much a history of events as of the progress of ideas and of thought and an enquiry into the causes which regulate such progress, in the style made popular by Voltaire. But Bettinelli would now be entirely forgotten were it not for the stir created by his " Lettere Virgiliane " (1757). He fully realised the decadent state of literature at this time and was disgusted with the Arcadian collections. He saw that the slavish imitation of the Cinquecentisti made progress impossible. Montesquieu and Voltaire had popularised the letter as a vehicle for the expression of opinion, so Bettinelli's letters are supposed to be addressed to Arcadia from the lower world by Virgil. They contain a violent attack on all the ancient Italian poets, especially on Dante. A conclave of poets dead and gone condemn him as

" je june in imagination, rancorous in his suggestions, rough in his style." The conventional rules for epic poetry are applied to the " Commedia "—a title which is strongly censured—and the whole is found lamentably wanting when compared with the " Essay on Man." Enough good remains, however, to fill about five cantos. This should be rescued and the rest condemned. The other classical poets fare little better. Even Petrarch, for whom Bettinelli professed real admiration, must only be read in selections. Tasso's " Aminta," Berni, Tassoni's " Secchia Rapita " and Redi's dithyramb are almost the only works that succeed in passing through the eye of Bettinelli's needle. This was bad enough, but Bettinelli was so ill-advised as to publish " Versi sciolti di tre eccellenti autori moderni," namely himself, Frugoni and Algarotti, as models of perfection. In his enthusiasm for blank verse he would institute an auto-da-fè of all rhyming dictionaries in the interests of literature. But the verse he gives us is not above the average of Arcadia, and abounds in far-fetched expressions and words transposed. It is true that the volume appeared anonymously, but the secret could not have been kept, and Frugoni, like Algarotti, at once disavowed all connection with Betinelli.

Yet these letters were very influential at the time, and undoubtedly helped to prejudice Voltaire against Dante. They were followed by the " Lettere Inglesi," in which the poor state of literature in Italy is ascribed to the absence of a capital, such as Paris or London. " For if Italy had a centre, a

point of union, she would far outstrip every other nation in art, in letters and perhaps in science." In his old age, when he was referred to as " the Nestor of Italian literature," Bettinelli somewhat modified his opinions and at the same time protested against the prevailing imitation of foreign literature. But he never really changed his views on Dante, whom he was incapable of appreciating. His criticisms of his contemporaries are quite worthless, for they are dictated entirely by personal motives and are not based on any sound principles. But Bettinelli's protests against foreign imitation are timely and the Caffè only followed in his footsteps. Even the " Lettere Virgiliane " were useful in drawing attention to Dante by the controversy they aroused, just as Voltaire's strictures on Shakespeare really hastened the recognition of our greatest poet outside England.

Needless to say Bettinelli's attacks soon called up champions on the other side. Chief among these was Gasparo Gozzi (1713-1786), who was at work on an edition of the " Commedia " for the Venetian bookseller Zatta, and whose defence of the poet was not therefore entirely disinterested, a fact which Bettinelli duly noticed in his reply in the " Lettere Inglesi." Thus the " Giudizio degli antichi poeti sopra la moderna censura di Dante " (1758), like the famous papers on Milton in the " Spectator," may owe its origin in some measure to a desire to puff a particular edition. Not that we wish to question Gozzi's genuine love of Dante. He answered once for all the usual objections to the

" Divina Commedia " on the score of difficulty. " If you read Dante's poem with no one to guide you, Francesca da Rimini, Count Ugolino and the Arsenal of Venice will strike you as marvellous passages. Without a guide to carry you back to Dante's own times you may be forgiven for skipping or nodding as you read, but at least refrain from expressing an opinion on Dante." The importance of the allegorical side of the poem is duly emphasised. The scene of the dialogues, like that of the " Lettere Virgiliane," is laid in the Elysian Fields, whence they are supposed to be sent to Zatta with four letters from Anton Francesco Doni. They have all Gozzi's grace and rather melancholy charm. But he was a child of the classical eighteenth century, when correctness was everything, and instead of pointing out the absurdity of applying to Dante rules to which he had never thought of conforming, he endeavours to prove that the poem was really " correct " and, of course, he fails. However, the " Difesa di Dante " marks the turning of the tide and henceforth Dante begins to take his proper place in Italian literature.

Gasparo Gozzi, though his mother was a Tiepolo, belonged to a family of the lesser nobility which was outside the Great Council. Like his brother Carlo he was a prominent member of the Academy of the Granelleschi. The family affairs were already embarrassed when, in a fit of poetic absent-mindedness, according to Carlo, he married Luisa Bergalli, better known as Irminda Partenide, her name in Arcadia, a woman of no origin, but of

considerable literary ability, whose " Pindaric housekeeping " and large family rapidly brought matters to a crisis. To retrieve their fortunes, she made her husband become lessee of a theatre in Venice with the result that might have been expected. Gasparo, and indeed the whole family, were forced to undertake every kind of literary hack-work. He wrote verses to order, translated, compiled and led the kind of life which Southey was afterwards obliged to lead. In 1761 he published the " Mondo Morale," a rather dull performance, in which each member of a band of pilgrims reads a paper on some moral subject. It is varied in every kind of way. In one place, for instance, a translation of Klopstock's " Death of Adam " is introduced.

By this time literary journalism was firmly established in Italy. The " Giornale dei letterati " d'Italia " was by far the best of the earlier papers, especially during the first eight years of its existence (1710-18), when it was edited by Apostolo Zeno. But it is essentially a learned review, devoted almost entirely to the erudite subjects that were so fashionable in that day. Moderate in tone and well written, it is a distinguished monument of Italian scholarship, and it was even a financial success. Tiraboschi's continuation (1773-90) is well worthy of its traditions. Lami's lively style made his " Novelle letterarie " thoroughly readable, though he also confined himself to learned subjects. The sharpness of his tone once drew down upon him a warning from the Grand Duke and he soon

quarrelled with his collaborators, but he continued his " Novelle " unaided with complete success.

It was left to the " Spectator," however, to create a new era in literary journalism. " The translation of the English " Spectator," [1] says Goldoni, in his preface to the " Filosofo Inglese," " a periodical sheet, was seen in everybody's hands. The ladies, who did not read much at Venice in those days, took a liking to this kind of literature, and began to turn philosophers." Baretti told Johnson that the excellence of the " Spectator " " greatly quickened his curiosity to visit our country." Gasparo Gozzi thought that he might turn this craze to account and in 1760 began the " Gazzetta Veneta," the first of the Italian imitations of the " Spectator." The slight Eastern tales, moral essays, allegories and little poems suit his whimsical, delicate humour far better than longer compositions, and to our mind the vignettes of Venetian life, reproducing events which he had seen in his wanderings among the " calli " and canals, or had heard described at the Caffè Florian have a freshness that is lacking in much of the better-known " Osservatore," which succeeded the " Gazzetta " in 1761. Here the love of allegory and the moral element are often tedious, and the " Osservatore " suffers from being the work of one man. Gozzi has been called the *Venetian Addison*, but he is less in earnest than the " Spectator." He laughs, or rather smiles, at the weaknesses he sees, which his sense of humour enables him to enjoy without caring to reform. His object, he tells us,

[1] Probably the French translation (Amsterdam, 1754).

was " delicately to give lessons on manners," [1] and to try to bring philosophy from the libraries to life. His style is often affected in its imitation of the Cinquecentisti, for he shared this weakness of the Granelleschi to the full, and his work is often uneven, as was to be expected in periodicals appearing twice a week, but a volume of gems can easily be collected from his writings and he has considerable gifts as a critic. The success of these papers was only moderate, but, as Arturo Graf puts it, " Gozzi was not Addison, nor was the Venetian Republic England. '

Gasparo Gozzi had, however, a genuine love of the country that was unusual at this period. He regretted the disappearance of the simple life of the fields before the artificial " villeggiatura," which he satirises in his sermone on the subject. His " Relazione villereccia," with its description of the journey, the rain and the country dance, is charming in its genuine naturalness. On the whole, we are inclined to think that the " Sermoni " contain Gozzi's best work. They are modelled on Horace's Epistles. The unrhymed hendecasyllables are easy and varied, and Gasparo here appears before us without disguise. We share his sufferings under the hack-work to which he was condemned. In his misery he longs for the time when he shall be at rest in the family tomb, and describes himself as spinning out his brain, fibre by fibre, as a woman spins out flax

[1] Fare con delicatezza delle lezzioni sopra i costumi."
Cp. Luigi Carrer's epitaph on him, "Corresse con arguzia e senz' astio i depravati costumi e il mal gusto."

to gain a miserable pittance,[1] or weighing his mind and his very soul, ounce by ounce, in the scales and selling them cheaper than butcher's meat to the grasping booksellers. The two on old age are also excellent.

Gozzi was a licenser of the press with the munificent salary of ten scudi a year. In 1760 he failed to obtain a professorship. In 1774 he was sent to report on the schools of Padua, where he spent most of the rest of his life. Three years later he threw himself into the Brenta in a fit of delirium. Caterina Dolfin Tron, a generous patroness of men of letters, did all she could to ease his later years, while his second wife, Sara Cenet, made up for Irminda's deficiencies by nursing him tenderly till his death.

Among the intimate friends of the Gozzi household was the independent, violent, at times even brutal, Marcantonio Giuseppe Baretti (1719-1789), the greatest Italian critic of his century.[2] He was born in Turin, but ran away from home in his sixteenth year to an uncle at Guastalla, where Carlo Cantoni, a well-known writer of Bernesque verse, first put him on the right road in literature. Thence he wandered to Venice, and, in 1740, to Milan. Here he spent three of the happiest years of his life with Count Imbonati and the genial friends who were soon to found the Academy of the Trasformati. During these years he wrote a large quantity of occasional verse, chiefly "capitoli,"

[1] Sermone a, S. E. Marco Foscarini.

[2] L. Collison-Morley, "Giuseppe Baretti and his Friends."

in Berni's manner, and translated the whole of Corneille. After various further wanderings he returned to his native town, but a well-deserved satire on a Professor of the University, Bartoli, made such a sensation that he came into conflict with the authorities and ultimately decided to go to England (1751) as he had now spoilt all his prospects of preferment at home.

Giardini, the famous violinist, found him work in connection with the Italian opera in London, but he gradually abandoned this for taking pupils. Johnson's friendship soon launched him in literary society and brought him work, though he was often in financial difficulties. The money he received for his Italian dictionary enabled him to return to Italy through Portugal and Spain as bear-leader to a young gentleman of quality. His delightful "Lettere familiari ai fratelli," and the English "Journey from London to Genoa" describe the trip. Disappointments in Milan drove him to Venice, where he published the "Frusta Letteraria" (1763-5) a paper modelled on the "Spectator," or rather on the "Rambler," in which he appears as Aristarco Scannabue, a crusty old soldier.

It is on the "Frusta Letteraria" (literary scurge) that Baretti's fame principally rests. He had begun to see the folly of Arcadia even before leaving Italy, and in England he had been brought into contact with Johnson's sturdy common sense and with a contemporary literature which, if not of the highest order, was at least real and thoroughly in touch with the life of the day. "I cannot help

thinking rather in the English way," he wrote to a friend in 1764, " and despising men of letters who make no mental effort when they write." He wishes to impress his countrymen with the necessity of saying something in their writings and of bringing literature back to actual life. For this reason he is really in sympathy with Goldoni and the Verris. But his loyalty to the Granelleschi obliged him to attack Goldoni and praise Carlo Gozzi, whom he really admired, and as, like all the members of that Academy, he was a rigid purist in matters of language, he was too utterly scandalised by the " Caffè's " views on style to tolerate it for a moment. Baretti saw that Arcadia was the arch-foe and he opened the " Frusta " with a slashing review of Morei's history of that institution. Thanks, no doubt, to Johnson's influence, he had returned from England a Shakespeare enthusiast, and in later years published a reply, in French, to Voltaire's strictures ; but he was too much a child of the eighteenth century to do Dante full justice. For Italian blank verse he had a violent hatred. He himself had translated Corneille into that metre, pleading his want of ability as an excuse, but he maintained that it was entirely contrary to the genius of the language, from which it should be altogether banished.

The value of Baretti's criticism is largely due to the vigorous independence of his personality. Never for a moment in doubt as to his own opinion, he delivers his judgments in a manner so striking that, whatever we may think of them, it is impossible

to neglect them. Consequently his views are probably more frequently quoted than those of any other Italian critic of his age. On the whole, too, his taste was sound, and if his abuse is often excessive in its violence, it is always interesting, and he generally respects all that is most deserving of respect. But Baretti was fully aware that biting satire would interest the general reader when reasoned argument would fail, and he deliberately uses his great gifts for it whenever possible. With him modern criticism may be said to take its start. He helped to bring literature back to earth again. His style is natural, easy and varied, while his vivid descriptive powers contrast favourably with those of almost any other writer of his day. It is not surprising to learn that he regards Benvenuto Cellini as "the best master of style that Italy possesses." He deliberately avoids the archaisms that were so popular with the Granelleschi, and, though there are signs of growing affectation in his old age, the simplicity and grace of his best work cannot fail to charm.

But the "Frusta" soon brought trouble and Aristarco's rashness even obliged him to go into hiding for some months. In 1765 he returned to London, where he was made F.S.A. and in 1769, Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy. His acquittal when tried for stabbing a man in self-defence in the Haymarket in this same year helped to increase his reputation. Thanks to Johnson, he became tutor to the eldest daughter of Thrale, the brewer, till he quarrelled with Mrs.

Thrale. In 1782 he was granted a pension of £80, but he was often in distress in his later years. He died in London and was buried at Marylebone. Baretti was a remarkable linguist. Not a few of his countrymen have written French and Italian almost indifferently, but to have left two separate reputations for work in two languages so different as English and Italian, and to have published books in French and Spanish as well, is no small achievement, though, of course, his English works do not concern us here.

In an age of learning literary history is never neglected. Gian Mario Crescimbeni, the "Custode d'Arcadia," published his "Istoria della volgar poesia" in 1698. It is clumsy in style and arrangement, while the criticism is meagre and pedantic, but it contains much useful matter, and since it was the first book of the kind, it supplied a distinct want. Crescimbeni possessed a sound knowledge of Provençal, and he deserves praise for recognising its importance in the study of Italian.

But the greatest of all the historians of Italian literature was Girolamo Tiraboschi (1731-94), of Bergamo, a Jesuit who remained loyal to the society through all its persecutions. In 1770 he was placed in charge of the library at Modena, and under his supervision it rapidly rose to be one of the best in the peninsula. His "Storia della letteratura italiana," which is a history of literature, science and art from the earliest times to the end of the seventeenth century, appeared in thirteen volumes between 1772 and 1781. Not till the

fourth volume do we reach Italian literature proper. As one would expect from the period, the "Storia" is a work of extraordinary learning and research, quite indispensable to any serious student of the subject. But it is valuable rather as a mine of information than as a product of sympathetic criticism. It is well arranged, but not well proportioned. Tiraboschi does not hesitate to devote more space to clearing up a doubtful point in the history of a minor poet than to a notice of a well-known writer whose career presents no such difficulties. He acquiesces in the judgments of his day whenever he stops to criticise; for instance, he ranks Petrarch above Dante. He makes no attempt to grasp the tendency of a whole period. But his book, with all its shortcomings, is far better than anything of the kind that has appeared either before or since. In fact, Tiraboschi has collected once for all the main mass of material which goes to the making of a history of his subject. De Sanctis calls him the Muratori of Italian literature, but he hardly holds the position in the history of literature which Muratori holds in regard to that of the Middle Ages.

Quadrio's "Della storia e della ragione di ogni poesia" (1739-42) is an attempt at a complete history of poetry, including even Chinese. Much of the material is naturally not first hand, and the work is often untrustworthy. Quadrio had the highest opinion of the importance of the poet's mission, and, like most of the compilers of his day, he was above all things patriotic. He loyally places Italian

poets at the head of each branch. His work should be interesting to Englishmen as the first Italian history of the kind to mention Shakespeare; but he merely repeats Voltaire's criticisms, declaring that Shakespeare lived at the same time as Lope da Vega and was the ruin of the English stage.

CHAPTER VI

MINOR LYRIC POETS—FOREIGN INFLUENCES—PARINI AND THE REVIVAL

METASTASIO had fixed the character of the eighteenth-century love-lyric and the work of the poets included in Carducci's " Poeti erotici del secolo XVIII " extends well into the nineteenth century. But some new source of inspiration was required, for none of them possessed real creative power, and this was found in the classics, especially in Horace. Though the imitation scarcely extends beyond the form, yet the classical influence is strongly marked.[1] The style is less rich and less reflective, but has more colour. The most important of them was Lodovico Savioli, of Bologna (1729-1804). Carducci considers him the best lyrist in his collection, both for colour and effectiveness, and ranks him next to Parini, though after a considerable interval. He is generally called Anacreontic, but Carducci holds that he owes more to Ovid than to Anacreon, while in his love of classical allusions, which is so great that a little classical dictionary was added to his " Amori " for the benefit of his fair admirers, he reminds one of Propertius. This classicism, however, was no affectation, but a part of his very being. The lightness and grace of the

[1] Torre del Rezzonico called them " i poeti dell' atteggiamento greco-latino."

"Amori," which wedded the gallantry of the time to classical mythology, made them extraordinarily popular, and they went through twenty-four editions before 1830. Needless to say the matter is as light as the style. There is no passion, not a shadow of melancholy, and this want, combined with the monotony of the metre and the mythology, makes them wearisome to a modern ear. With him we may class Jacopo Vittorelli (1749-1835), "the last poet of the eighteenth century," in whose verse there is not a trace of the great revolution through which he lived. His anacreontics to Irene and Doris have all the classical grace and polish of Savioli, and were almost as popular. Byron's admiration for Pope's perfect form is well known and he honoured one of Vittorelli's sonnets with a translation of no great merit.

More interesting is Giovanni Fantoni (1755-1807) or Labindo, to give him the Arcadian name by which he is best known. His poems, like his life, vividly reflect the stormy period of the French invasion. His opposition to the annexation of Piedmont by France brought about his imprisonment, but we soon find him on General Joubert's staff, and then in Genoa with Massena and Ugo Foscolo. He was made President of the Academy of Ferrara in the year of his death. His first poems, says Carducci, "introduced the American revolution into anacreontics and philosophical ideas into odes not constructed on the usual lines" and won him considerable fame in his day. A true Arcadian, he wrote on every kind of subject. He

celebrated Rodney's death in a number of poems and was the author of the popular children's song,

" Ora siam piccoli,
Ma cresceremo."

Fantoni showed his sympathy with the national cause by publishing a volume of odes with the imprint " Italia " in 1799. He is most original in his love-poems. He is unequal and unpolished, but his dash and energy, though occasionally degenerating into bombast, are distinctly refreshing and he is never dull.

But there were other influences at work. Italy, which had given the law to Europe in questions of literature during the Renaissance, had sunk to the position of a pupil. Literary adventurers such as Algarotti, Denina and Baretti were scouring Europe and coming back laden with the spoils of other literatures, which they made known to their countrymen by translations or imitations.

At this time, of course, French influence was supreme, and we have already said enough to show the debt owed France by Italy. But Voltaire and Montesquieu had returned to Paris enthusiastic admirers of England. Consequently Gallomania brought Anglomania to Italy in its train and English influence was second only to that of France in the peninsula.[1] English was probably better known in Italy then than now. It was even taught in the girls' schools, and was considered almost

[1] See A. Graf's admirable " L'Anglomania e l'influsso inglese in Italia nel secolo, XVIII." (Turin, 1911.)

necessary in business. "Poetry, history, politics, philosophy, novels and other similar works of imagination," declares Denina, "all adopted the English genius, or character, or relied upon support from England." English poetry was ranked specially high. Milton, Dryden, Addison, Swift, Akenside, Johnson, Fielding, Gray, Thomson, Young, Ossian and Sterne were all known and imitated more or less in Italy, while Bacon, Locke, and, above all, Newton had large followings. Richardson, particularly his "Pamela," which, as we have seen, inspired several plays, also won considerable reputation. Pope was most popular, and translations of the much admired "Rape of the Lock" were very numerous. No less than three different versions appeared in 1722, and Pignotti imitated it in his "Treccia dorata." Alfieri himself translated the "Essay on Criticism." We shall deal with the influence exercised by several of the English poets in greater detail in other places. Shakespeare was gradually recovering from the effects of Voltaire's criticisms, which at least had the merit of drawing attention to him. But the reception given in Turin to Baretti's defence of the poet against Voltaire's strictures, written in French, shows that his enthusiasm had as yet made few converts. Not till the very end of the century did Shakespeare's influence begin to make itself felt in Italy.[1]

Agostino Paradisi (1736-83), who wrote numerous

[1] For an exhaustive account of the growth of Shakespeare's fame in Italy, see Graf, "L'Anglomania," etc., c. XIII.

poems on scientific and religious subjects, which, if uninspired, are not without a certain dignity and strength, also translated Pope; while Angelo Mazza (1741-1817), a protégé of Du Tillot, began his career with translations from Pope and Akenside, and then from Dryden, Gray, Parnell, Thomson and Mason. He wrote Pindaric odes, highly esteemed in their day, chiefly on musical subjects and on Platonism. His verse is often turgid and vague, but what else could be expected in Parma, the home of Frugoni? However, he is not unsuccessful in following the fashion of the time and versifying subjects which are now considered hopelessly unpoetical.

Aurelio Bertòla (1753-98) played an important part in introducing foreign literature into Italy. His "Idea della poesia alemanna" (1779), first made the principal German poets Kleist, Wieland, Goethe, etc., known to his countrymen. The book, an enlarged edition of which appeared in 1784, contains a quantity of information on German writers and German literature, much of which was, of course, obtained at second hand. There are not a few mistakes, and the criticism is often unsound, but, considering the ignorance of the subject that then prevailed in Italy, the book supplied a real want and Bertòla's translations greatly increased its value.

Bertòla's genuine love of the country and of country people, utterly different from the Arcadian conventions of the day, comes out prominently in lyrics, such as "La villanella." His peasants

are drawn from life. Hence Gessner especially appealed to him, and in 1777 he published a version of his Idyls in unrhymed hendecasyllables, which explains the influence exercised by these sentimental descriptions of nature on Italian poetry in the next generation. Klopstock's "Messiah" produced even more important results of a different character. The descriptions of German scenery in Bertòla's "Viaggio sul Reno," perhaps his best work, are a proof of his ability to appreciate the beauty of other countries than his own. He was familiar with English literature and admired Thomson's "Seasons," which were well known in Italy, as is proved by the fact that Parini's first volume bears the imprint "London: Giacomo Tomson."

But the jaded literary palate was craving for novelty, and found it in the gloomy churchyard literature originated by Young.[1] It was essentially English in origin. Gray's "Elegy," and the writings of Hervey and Blair are the principal examples after the "Night Thoughts." A regular school of what Carducci calls "Younghiana" arose, and here again Bertòla was the first to enter the field with his "Notti Clementine" on the death of Clement XIV, an avowed imitation of Young.[2] These dismal moralisings are obviously a reaction against the

[1] See B. Zumbini, "Studi di letteratura italiana," "La poesia sepolcrale straniera e italiana e il carme di Foscolo."

[2] "E del Anglico ciel caliginoso
il patetico suon piangendo chiedo."

frivolity of the early part of the century. But this grave poetry soon took a thoroughly Italian tone which produced a really great poem in Foscolo's "Sepolcri." As Zumbini puts it, the difference between "Paradise Lost" and the "Gerusalemme Liberata" well expresses the different effects of this kind of poetry in a Protestant and a Catholic country. In England the grave called forth melancholy ideas, which bade man fix all his hopes on another world. In Italy the tombs of the great dead became a means of inspiring men with hope in their prospects in this world and in rousing them to action.

Alessandro Verri's "Notti Romane" is a work of this kind. Verri had travelled. He knew England, where he had met Fox and Sterne, and he had considerably modified his views on style and other matters since the "Caffè"[1] He had written a Greek tale, "Le avventure di Saffo"; but it was after settling in Rome that, fired by the excitement at the discovery of the tombs of the Scipios, he magines himself in his "Notti" to be guided by Cicero among the Roman heroes, and then to be showing them the world of his own day. The result is a glorification of the humanity and justice of modern Europe as contrasted with the cruelty and violence of the ancient world, a remarkable proof of independence in a period characterised by unbounded admiration for all things Roman. The style is highly coloured, even affected, but Verri's dramatic power makes the book a great relief from

[1] Cp. his letter to his brother Pietro, June 28, 1783.

the dreary dissertations in which men of this day usually aired their views. It was deservedly popular owing to its lofty patriotism, and even during the early days of the " Risorgimento " it was widely read by young people.

Genuine romance was too strong a food for eighteenth-century digestions, but something was needed to wean the reading public, without undue violence, from the classical traditions upon which it had hitherto been reared, in preparation for the great change that was impending. This was found in the so-called bardic literature, the pseudo-romance of Macpherson's " Ossian," which took Europe by storm, and was a favourite book with the great Napoleon. An Englishman, Charles Sackville, brought it to the notice of Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808), at that time tutor to the Grimani family in Venice. Cesarotti was a well-known man of letters, whose works fill forty volumes. He translated Gray's " Elegy " and was the author of an improved and modernised version of the " Iliad." Such being his taste, he naturally preferred Voltaire to Shakespeare. However, the sonorous hendeca-syllables into which he rendered Macpherson's poetical prose are really admirable. Alfieri was so carried away by them that he began by taking them as a model for his own style. The first volume appeared in 1763, the second, nine years later. In Italy, as in England, " Ossian " hardly left permanent traces on literature ; but it satisfied the needs of the day, and men turned with relief to the wild Northern scenery and the melancholy

romantic chivalry of the poem after so many years of Arcadia, though classical tradition was still supreme.

Here we must mention Alfonso Varano, who wrote verse of all kinds, and even composed tragedies, but is only remembered by his " Visioni " in *terza rima*, where religious subjects are substituted for mythology. Dante is his model, and the " Divina Commedia " and the Bible his chief sources of inspiration. But, as d'Ancona and Bacci put it, his Dante is rather *frugonizzato*. There is often more theology than poetry in his visions, which are obscure, monotonous and turgid. Some celebrate the deaths of distinguished people, others such subjects as the plague at Messina or the Lisbon earthquake. But Varano deserves mention for helping to revive interest in Dante, and in the next generation he had considerable influence on Monti.

We must consider one other aspect of poetry before coming to Parini. If Costanzi and the Petrarchists were the models for Arcadia in Rome, Berni, the principal burlesque poet of Italy, was assiduously imitated at Milan in the Academy of the Trasformati and by most of the leading writers in the neighbouring towns.[1] This work can hardly be called poetry. At best, it is respectable verse. It is purely ephemeral and seeks to amuse by its wit, its *brio* and its natural ease, as we can see in Baretti's " Piacevoli poesie " and in many other collections. These poems often burlesque the luxury, the education and the prejudices of the

[1] Concari, c. 6.

time and are thus linked with satire, which Parini was to revive. But, as a rule, they are purely frivolous, and the collection published in honour of the death of Balestrieri's pet cat, the best known of them all, is thoroughly characteristic. Eighty-two poets contributed in all languages, even in Hebrew, among them the Gozzi brothers, Luisa Bergalli, Baretti, Imbonati, and almost everybody who could scribble a sonnet in Italy. No wonder Gasparo Gozzi asks whether these are the breasts that fed Orpheus and Amphion.

The century did, however, produce one distinguished burlesque poet in Niccolò Forteguerri (1674-1735). He belonged to an old family from Pistoia and entered upon an ecclesiastical career, ultimately rising to be Secretary of the Propaganda; but disappointment at not receiving higher preferment is said to have hastened his end. A translation of Terence brought him into notice and he produced quantities of Arcadian verse. His fame, however, rests upon his "Ricciardetto." He wrote the first canto in a day for a bet and devoted his leisure to the poem during the rest of his life. It was published in 1738, the author's name being Grecised as "Carteromaco." Berni, Ariosto, and above all, Pulci, were his models. His is a rough country Muse, he tells us, singing in the open air for her own pleasure with no harp of gold. But the ease, the grace and the spontaneity of the verse, combined with the author's untiring gaiety, make the poem eminently readable. It is, of course, a skit on romantic epics like the "Orlando Furioso" and

the heathen Ferraù, who becomes a Christian hermit, but invariably yields to temptation, is the most original figure in the poem. His punishment by Rinaldo and his death are amusingly described. Forteguerri can be serious, however. The love-scenes between Ricciardetto and Despina are often really good. But he has all Pulci's want of reverence. The satires on priests and monks and the lives they led are genuine in their bitterness and interesting when we remember the author's position. It is not surprising that the poem was put on the Index. A key to the chief characters is said to have been found among Forteguerri's papers at his death. The poem has been very popular.

We are now free to turn to Giuseppe Parini (1729-99),[1] the first great poet of modern Italy, the man who was to give his country's literature its true direction. He was born at Bosisio in Brianza, by the little lake of Pusiano, Pliny's Eupilis, which appears so often in his poems. His father was a silk-mercer in poor circumstances, and in 1738 he sent his son to his sister in Milan to be educated at the Barnabite school there. In 1741 Parini's aunt died, leaving him the small income for a daily mass without which he could not take orders. He was wretchedly poor and was obliged to support himself by copying law-documents and taking pupils, among whom were two nephews of the

[1] Carducci, "Studi su Giuseppe Parini," in Vols. XIII and XIV of his works; de Sanctis, "Nuovi Saggi Critici," and "Storia," c. XIX; Concari, c. 8; Landau, Pt. II, c. 4.

Canonico Agudio, a prominent member of the Trasformati, who became his warm friend. In 1752 his first volume of poems appeared under an anagram of his own name, "Ripano Eupilino," with the imprint "London, Giacomo Tomson." It contains occasional verse of all kinds, sonnets, translations, etc., among them being a not unsuccessful rendering of Horace's "O fons Bandusiae." They do not rise above the average of Arcadia, but they are different in one important respect. There is nothing courtly about them. Parini could not write fashionable poetry "because he was a country clown, living from hand to mouth between the school and the sacristy," declares Carducci. "He was a conservative of the same brood as Gozzi and Baretti," whose poems had appeared shortly before his own.

This may be the reason why there was at first some little opposition to his admission to the Trasformati; but he became a member in 1754, largely owing to the influence of the genial Gian Carlo Passeroni (1713-1803), who to some extent paved the way for Parini in his kindly satirical poem, "Cicerone." This is nominally a burlesque life of Cicero, but in reality a series of digressions on every imaginable subject. In the dialogues with his famous cock, the one companion of his later days, Passeroni shows considerable vigour when attacking the vices of the age and the absurdities of Arcadia. Sterne visited him in Milan, for he regarded him as his master, since "Tristram Shandy" is largely composed of digressions. But the digressions are

the only point of resemblance. Nothing could be less like Sterne than this loose rambling poem. In fact, Passeroni is little more than an improvisatore, and even Baretti, who admired him at first, tired of the 11,097 stanzas before the end.

The atmosphere of the Trasformati, as refounded by Count Imbonati in 1743, was thoroughly sound. Here was to be found all that was most healthy in the literary life of Milan. Berni was the master, as we have seen, and though the verse produced can hardly be called poetry, it was at least thoroughly in touch with actual life, and stood for something real, which is more than can be said for most of the productions of Arcadia. The great Italian masters were treated with respect, while emptiness and pedantry were not tolerated. More than one of Parini's early poems was read under the shadow of the plane-tree, the crest of the Academy.

In 1754 he took the irrevocable step and became a priest. He had no vocation, but poverty left him no choice. The Church was the one really democratic institution of the day, and an "abate," whatever his origin, could go anywhere by virtue of his cloth. Consequently we find him installed as tutor to the Duchess of Serbelloni's children almost immediately. She was a woman of culture, and able to appreciate his character and ability, but this was far from being the case with her husband, with whom she was on bad terms and on whom Parini wrote a very nasty epigram.

A man of Parini's decided views was not likely to escape literary quarrels, and in 1756 he published an

attack on the affected archaisms of Padre Alessandro Bandiera. Three years later Padre Branda, whose pupil Parini had been, issued some strictures, not altogether undeserved, on the dialect poetry so much in favour with the Trasformati. Parini replied and a violent controversy arose which produced some sixty different publications, and lasted several months, as nearly every man of letters in Milan ranged himself on one side or the other.

During the interval between these controversies he composed his two first odes, the "Vita Rustica" and the "Salubrità dell'Aria." The latter he did not publish till 1780, for he would polish and correct his work for years with a care which Pope himself might have envied. Though unequal and considerably inferior to what was to come, these odes contain the kernel of all that Parini afterwards wrote. "Even Parini," says Carducci, "like all our eighteenth-century poets, except Alfieri, starts from Arcadia. Indeed, without depreciating him in the least, we might say that he never quite freed his left heel from Arcadia." In these two odes, obviously products of the neo-classical school, this fact is especially patent. Parini owes not a little to the example of Balestrieri and Tanzi and other Trasformati who wrote odes on the moral and religious themes so dear to the poets of the latter half of the century. But their sincerity, their restrained strength, and their lofty moral ideals at once raise Parini's odes above those of his contemporaries. The statement in his very first ode that he is happy only when he can unite what

is useful to the charm of verse[1] is worthy of note. It is easy to recognise the man who quarrelled with the Duchess and left her incontinently in 1762, when, in spite of her boasted democratic sympathies, she boxed a maid's ears unjustly. Poverty now stared him in the face. He was even obliged to send Agudio a "capitolo" in Berni's manner, begging him for assistance, as he had not the wherewithal to supply his mother with bread.[2]

But Parini had not wasted his time in the Serbelloni household. In 1763, the year after his departure, appeared the "Mattino," the first part of his great poem, "Il Giorno," or the description of a day in the life of a young man of fashion of the period. It was the outcome of eight years of observation of the species at close quarters. The dialogue on nobility, where a poet of humble birth and a noble find themselves in the same tomb after death and fall to quarrelling, doubtless belongs to the same period. In this the poet shows that instances of virtue are as common among the poor as among the rich, and that the noble's much vaunted ancestors are little more than robbers and murderers when judged by the ordinary standard. Landau points out that the passage contrasting the "Giovin Signore" with his really noble ancestors in the "Giorno" was only added in 1791, after

[1] "L'utile unir può al vanto
Di lusinghevol canto."
"La Salubrità dell'aria."

[2] "La mia povera madre non ha pane
Se non da me, ed io non ho danaro
da mantenerla al meno per domane."

the Revolution had disappointed Parini's hopes. The dialogue was issued posthumously. "Il Mezzogiorno," the second part of the "Giorno," was published in 1765.

The "Mattino" at once made Parini famous. The Austrian Government had long wished to rouse the degenerate aristocracy to a sense of its responsibilities, and henceforward the poet was not allowed to want, though he was never in easy circumstances. In 1768 Count Firmian, the Plenipotentiary in Milan, entrusted Parini with the editorship of the "Gazzetta di Milano," and it is characteristic of him that he used his position to praise Clement XIV for an imaginary prohibition of the singing of male sopranos, an abuse which is the subject of his ode, "La Musica." Parini's statement drew from Voltaire a letter of congratulation to the Pope. In the following year he was given the Chair of Eloquence in the Canobiana, and when, after the expulsion of the Jesuits, the schools were removed to Brera, he retained his post with a different title till his death. His treatise "Dei principi delle belle lettere," though the style is affected and colourless, shows the originality of his teaching; but it gives no idea of the inspiring personality of the lecturer. The chair from which he delivered his lectures is still preserved at Brera. In 1772 an ecclesiastical benefice was conferred upon him, and in 1776 he received a pension from the Pope. In 1791 he became superintendent of the public schools.

Though Parini failed to write the ode on Maria Teresa's death with which he was entrusted in 1780,

he was a loyal subject to Austria, for the horrors of Spanish rule were not forgotten in Milan. He appreciated Firmian's enlightened government, and was grateful for the benefits he had received. He had no love for the Encyclopædists, but his sympathy with the oppressed of all classes filled him with high hopes at the outbreak of the Revolution and he welcomed the arrival of the French troops in 1796. Napoleon and Saliceti made him a member of the Municipal Council, but here the grasping character of the Jacobin rulers soon disillusioned him. He opposed them to the best of his ability till he was dismissed three years later with six of his colleagues. His conduct was warmly praised by his old enemy, Verri, and they were at last reconciled. His infirmities were increasing, especially the weakness in his legs from which he had suffered from boyhood, and which is often mentioned in his poems, while a cataract deprived him of the use of an eye. But he retained his interests in the events of the day till the end. The return of the Austrians was a relief to him, for he was tired of democratic orgies, though he had some fears for his Professorship. He only survived the restoration a few months, and died on August 15th, 1799. He composed the sonnet, "Predaro i Filistei l'arca di Dio," protesting against political excesses, on the morning of his death.

The eighteenth century was essentially an unpoetical age throughout Europe and at no time was there a greater similarity between the literatures of the principal countries. The satire and the

moral epistle, the most prosaic kinds of poetry, and odes dealing with scientific and other unpromising subjects, carefully elaborated with patient toil, were the favourite forms, and Parini was a child of his age. Carducci has collected some dates which will help us to establish his position. Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois" and Richardson's "Clarissa Harlowe" appeared in 1748. 1751 marks the beginning of the great Encyclopædia and the publication of Voltaire's "Siècle de Louis XIV," while Lessing's "Fables" were published in 1753, just ten years before the "Mattino." But Parini's poem was as important for the history of Italian literature as any of these works. Nearly all later poets look up to him reverently as their master.

Metastasio was a plebeian and betrayed his origin, which he tried to conceal, by his subservience to his social superiors. Parini was a plebeian who was proud of his origin and fully realised the superior worth of his own class as compared with most of the nobles whom he had been able to study at close quarters. He saw things as they were, and was not in the least dazzled by appearances. "He created his own material, his own style," says Giordani, "and performed in a few pages the noblest feat that can be performed in poetry, for he championed the claims of virtue against those of fortune and ridiculed the rich instead of the poor." "Perhaps it is not true," the poet tells us in one of the very best passages in the "Mezzogiorno,"[1] "but

[1] "Mezzogiorno," 250.

there is a tale that once upon a time men were equal, and 'plebeian' and 'noble' were terms unknown." But the gods found the uniformity dull and sent Pleasure down to earth, when distinctions arose. "So men were divided and the gentleman drew apart from the vulgar herd, whose fibre was too coarse to be able to respond to the soft appeals of the new sensations with which they were wooed."[1] Hence they sank to be mere ministers to the pleasures of the great, in which they had no share; and it was their cause that Parini was to plead.

He is no conventional singer of the glories of the rice-fields, like Count Spolverini in his "Coltivazione del riso." In the "Salubrità dell' Aria" Parini shows us the miserable condition of the wretches who work in them and the unhealthiness they caused when introduced into the very walls of Milan. He brings poetry back to earth again and describes what he sees. As de Sanctis puts it, we once more feel the man behind the poet. But for the genuine, out-of-door country life he has nothing but praise. In his fine ode on Education he gives expression to his ideals in the account of the up-bringing of the young Achilles. Yet one feels instinctively that it is not so much the country itself as the manly virtue to which it gives rise that appeals to Parini. He is essentially a man of the town, and we should look in vain for Gasparo Gozzi's

[1] "Così l'Uom si divise: e fu il Signore
dai volgari distinto a cui nel seno
troppo languir l'ebeti fibre, inette
a rimbalzar sotto i soavi colpi
de la nova cagione, onde fur tocche."

loving study of the country in his work. But he had a genuine affection for his native Eupilis.[1] "Happy, peaceful hills that encircle my lovely Eupilis with your well-loved gentle slope! I exult in the beauty that nature has given you and turn my steps towards you, a willing exile."[1]

Parini's sturdy independence appears in his statement that he considers himself absolutely free since he possesses neither avarice nor ambition, as well as in the only really striking lines in the "Vita Rustica": "Not born to knock at the hard doors of the great, I shall enter the kingdom of death naked, but free."[2]

The "Giorno" shows us the very reverse of all this. We are introduced to the "Giovin Signore," who has retired to bed at daybreak, rising late, ringing for his morning coffee or chocolate and conversing not with his steward, but with his dancing-master or his teachers of French and music. He will toy with a beautifully-bound volume, possibly a work of Voltaire, the French "Proteus of many forms," "the master of those who make pretence to knowledge," while his hair is being dressed; or he will chatter with a fashionable miniature painter. When at last the labour of the

[1] "Colli beati e placidi
che il vago Eupili mio
cingite col dolcissimo
insensibil pendio.
Dal bel rapir mi sento
che natura vi diè,
ed esule contento
a voi rivolgo il piè"
"La Vita Rustica."

[2] "Me non nato a percotere
le dure illustri porte,
nudo accorrà, ma libero,
il regno de la morte."

toilet is over, he goes out in his fashionable gilt coach. The " Mattino " is purely descriptive, but the " Mezzogiorno " is relieved with a touch of the dramatic element. We are introduced to the lady to whom the hero is cicisbeo, " l'altrui fida consorte, a lui si cara," at a dinner at her house and admire the perfection with which the hero has mastered the arts of a " cavaliere servente." Then the guests are described. A patriotic Italian, Parini satirises the rage for foreign goods. Like many others in his day, he regarded agriculture as the backbone of national prosperity and trade as an evil, which would prove the ruin of the simple life. So a disciple of Verri, who can talk of nothing but commerce, is held up to scorn. We are also shown a glutton and a vegetarian, who is unable to endure the thought of an animal being killed. The dinner, the coffee, the talk and the gambling are all brought before us. But Parini is not a dramatic poet, and in the " Mezzogiorno," as in the other parts of the poem, he relies almost entirely on description.

In the original plan, the third part, the " Sera," was to have ended the work, but this was afterwards divided into the " Vespro " and the " Notte," which were never finished and only appeared after Parini's death. Like Pope, Parini was continually correcting and revising his poem, and there are endless various readings. The " Vespro " is short, dealing with the round of visits and the " Corso," the evening drive and promenade. In the " Notte " we are back in the lady's house, listening to the talk and watching the card-tables. We know that

Parini meant to describe a night at the play, and possibly his hero's death, funeral and descent into Hell. But he saw that the French Revolution had given the death-blow to the old order of things, and when his friends urged him to publish the remaining parts of his poem in later days, he answered that it would be pure cowardice, no less shameful than insulting the dead, to publish an attack on a class that was in a state of dissolution. Perhaps his dialogue on Nobility may give us an idea of how he would have executed the last scene of all.

Fornari, as quoted by Carducci, describes Parini as "a man who never allows a liberty, who never jokes, and with whom it would be impossible to joke; his laugh makes us frown." About Parini's dignity there cannot be two opinions, but we think there is something to be said for Concari's view that he was not as austere as he is generally represented. He was popular in literary circles among his own sex, and some of his best poems are dedicated to his lady friends. Countess Castelbarco is the "inclita Nice" whose enquiries inspired the "Messaggio," while the "Recita dei Versi" is dedicated to her sister, Paola, and "Il Pericolo" to that well-known patroness of men of letters, the Venetian Cecilia Maria Tron. Indignation makes his verses, but he does not lash vice like Juvenal. Irony, which, we are told, is characteristic of the Milanese to this day, is the dominating note of the "Giorno." The life of the "Giovin Signore" only required to be described by a man of Parini's ability exactly as it was to arouse the

contempt it deserved. He is not a popular satirist, painting the contrast to raise a laugh. He deliberately works up to the desired effect, which is tremendous when it is reached. He does not point the moral: he leaves us to draw it from the picture he sets before us. His favourite method is to compare small things with great, to liken the toils and victories of the life of this young idler to those of his ancestors in war or in the council-chamber.

Parini's contempt for the structure of the aristocratic society of his day is boundless, but he very rarely breaks through his dignified reserve to indulge in actual attack. The system of "cicisbeism" seemed to him to lie at the root of the evil and is the main subject of his poem. He had nothing but scorn for the emasculate existence of the "cavaliere servente." The attitude of the complacent husband, when contrasted with the passionate love and jealousy of other days, calls forth one of his few outbursts of indignation. The famous allegory of the compact between love and marriage deals with the same theme. We can also feel the depth to which he is moved—for he knew what it was to want bread himself—by the picture of the starving crowd gorging itself on the fumes of the dinner at the great house. But the contrast between the peasant who regulates his day by the sun and the "heavenly offspring" to whom "kindly love" has given a different lot, with which the poem opens, is more in accordance with his usual method. Many of the incidents have become famous—that of the "Vergine Cuccia," for instance, in the

"Mezzogiorno," when an old servant is dismissed and left to starve after years of faithful service for having ventured to kick his mistress's lap-dog which had bitten him. But probably the description of the descent of Pleasure to earth and the effects of her coming is the best thing of its kind in the poem. It is the clear recognition of the uselessness, both moral and material, of the fashionable life of the day, which had only roused the unbounded admiration of his predecessors, when compared with a life of honest toil, that is the new note struck by Parini.

People who delight in collecting the supposed borrowings of great original writers have been busy with Parini and attempts have been made to show that he owes much to the "Rape of the Lock."[1] But the similarities between the two poems do little more than show the similarity of society in the two countries. The fact that Parini makes Love's winged ministers scatter powder on the heads of young and old alike, so as not to give the former any advantage in love's battles, does not prove that they are borrowed from Pope's sylphs. Surely no two poems could be less alike than the graceful, playful mock-heroic "Rape of the Lock," thoroughly in sympathy with the society which it describes with gentle banter, and Parini's ironical satire, the life-work of a man of reflection, firmly convinced of the rottenness of the society, in which he has no place, and using his powers of ridicule to compass its overthrow. Prince Belgioioso has been held to be the original of the "Giovin Signore." But Parini's

[1] See especially Zanella, in "Nuov. Ant," 1st July, 1882.

hero is obviously a type, and if the cap fitted the Prince, it was only natural that his friends should put it on him.

It has also been said that Parini was indebted to Martelli for his unrhymed hendecasyllables. He had doubtless read the " Femia," but he had already made his metre entirely his own in the " Giorno." The form and the matter are absolutely one. His verse is always noble. " Its tones can be scornful and indignant, or harsh and strident. It can both wound and flatter, though it is more often rough than tender ; but it is nearly always clear and elegant, beaten out on the anvil by an exquisite artist of his mother tongue." Parini has been blamed for his frequent inversions and for his love of classical allusions. But the very intensity of the man, his determination to set before us just what he sees, without any meretricious Arcadian ornament, prevents his verse from possessing the smoothness to which his readers had been accustomed. Moreover, the matter was always more to him than the manner. Classical mythology was part of every poet's stock-in-trade at this time and Parini could not have dispensed with it, had he wished to do so. Some of his most telling effects are made by an ironical use of it.

De Sanctis well points out, however, that you are conscious throughout the poem of the lonely man among his books, who has no sympathy with the life he paints. He has no dramatic gift, and the unrelieved description palls at times, for Parini could not set his world in action before us. This Goldoni has done, and it is therefore to him that we

must turn for our knowledge of Italy in the eighteenth century. Yet this very aloofness gives Parini's satire its permanent value. Had not his mental and moral qualities been such as to enable him to have a clear insight into the real state of his country, he could never have paved the way for the new generation.

Parini's lyrics are no less epoch-making than the "Giorno." Carducci divided them into two periods, the first lasting till 1777. This is the date of the "Laurea," celebrating the taking of a degree in law at the University of Pavia by a woman, Maria Pellegrini Amoretti, for sex was never a bar in an Italian university. The event made a great stir at the time, but it is now only remembered by Parini's ode. The earlier lyrics are unequal and show no great signs of advance. The second, the period of accomplishment, dates from the "Recita dei Versi" (1783) to the splendid "Alla Musa" (1795); for Parini's powers expanded as he advanced in years. Horace and Petrarch and Chiabrera were his masters. But his odes are marked by the same high ideals of conduct and of art that distinguish all his work. He did not write easily, and his occasional verse is quite undistinguished. His thoughts had to be laboriously hammered into their final shape. "Morality and beauty," says Concari, "form the basis of his lyrics, which are richer in thought than in imagination, richer in reflection than in feeling, sober and strong." The "Innesto del Vaiuolo," a Pindaric ode urging the wider practice of "Montegu's" inoculation in

Italy, was the first to attract attention, as such subjects were thoroughly to the taste of the day, and it was widely imitated. As a rule, however, Parini preferred the seven and eight-syllabled lines that have been the popular metre in Italy from time immemorial, and he brought out all their possibilities by his clever modifications. One of his most successful devices was to strengthen them by the addition of a hendecasyllable, as in the " Tempesta " and the famous " Caduta."

His odes are usually written with a purpose. In " Il Bisogno," for instance, like Beccaria, he pleads the cause of those who have been driven to steal by want, while in " L'Impostura " the author of the " Giorno " uses all his irony in the cause of truth. But the two odes in which we see most of Parini himself are the " Alla Musa " and " La Caduta." In the former the man who really loves the Muses is described as " he to whom heaven has given a calm understanding, pure affections and simple tastes ; who is contented with his lot and with his ancestral fortune and asks for no more ; who often flies from the wearying leisure of the great and the noise of the town, and lives where nature spreads her soft influence on hill or shore." [1]

[1] " Colui cui diede il ciel placido senso
e puri affetti e semplice costume ;
che di se pago e dell'avito censo
più non presume ;
che spesso al faticoso ozio dei grandi
e a l'urbano clamor s'involа, e vive
dove spande Natura influssi blandi
'in colle o in rive."

The " Caduta," which is probably the best known of the odes and is certainly the most characteristic, brings out clearly the poet's independence. He describes how he fell down in the street, owing to the weakness of his legs, on a wet, snowy day and was helped by a kindly passer-by, who knew him by sight. This friend gives him advice, urging him, since he has failed to grow rich in his own way, to try to get himself a carriage by judicious flattery of the great. " Who are you," exclaims the indignant poet, " that would hang this ancient weight upon me and attempt to drag my spirit down to earth? You are more kind than just.[1] When a man is old and feeble he asks openly, without humbling himself, and if the great turn their backs on him, he knows how to steel himself against such treatment. He neither humbles himself from suffering, nor exalts himself from pride." And he thanks his friend for his kindness, but goes home alone. " Parini," says de Sanctis,[2] " is the first poet of the new literature who is a man, that is, who has within him something alive and passionate, religious, political and moral. Educated on the old lines, but in modern surroundings, he received the new ideas through Dante and Virgil. The more I consider him, the more beautiful does this harmonious picture of a man appear, so simple and severe in its modern grandeur,

[1] " Chi sei tu, che sostenti
A me questo vetusto
Pondo, e l'anima tenti
Prostrarmi a terra ? Umano sei, non giusto."

[2] " Nuovi saggi critici," pp. 169-199.

and I bow down respectfully before the first man of the new Italy."

Fable-writing in imitation of La Fontaine was at this time a popular form of satire.[1] Crudeli was one of the first to adopt it and Passeroni and Bertòla also essayed it with some success. They were, however, eclipsed by Lorenzo Pignotti (1739-1812) and Luigi Fiacchi (1754-1825). Animal subjects were preferred and every kind of metre was used. Pignotti chose the negative method of satirising his own times, while Fiacchi, or Casio, to use his best-known name, set himself the positive task of inculcating virtue; and his directness and simplicity raise him above Pignotti, who suffers from being too prolix. But the most important poem of this kind was the "Animali Parlanti" of Giambattista Casti,[2] the author of lyrics and opera-bouffes, to which we have already referred. He was a typical literary adventurer of the time, who had wandered all over Europe in search of a living by his pen, and whose writings were as loose as his life. His sympathies were democratic and the "Animali Parlanti" is a general satire on vice in high places, with which Casti was only too well acquainted. It is written in *sesta rima*, and, though far too long, it is often witty and biting, in spite of the coarseness with which it is disfigured, and it was very popular in its day. Casti had already attacked Catherine II and her Court, for he had been in St. Petersburg, under the disguise of Tartar names, in his "Poema Tartaro."

[1] Concari, c. VI.

[2] Parini calls him "prete vecchio, bruto c puzzolente."

CHAPTER VII

ALFIERI AND ITALIAN TRAGEDY

TRAGEDY[1] was the one crown wanting to the poetic glory of Italy and the attempts that had hitherto been made to supply it were singularly feeble. In a letter praising and criticising Alfieri's early plays Calsabigi gives us a clear idea of the state of things prevailing in his day. Performances of the few existing Italian tragedies, or of translations from the French, were occasionally given in the private theatres of the villas belonging to the nobility, where the actors were usually amateurs, or by the pupils in the Jesuit colleges. Professional actors came, as a rule, " from provinces where the inhabitants neither speak our language in its purity nor know how to pronounce it correctly " ; and as they were invariably comedians, they were wholly unsuited to the tragic stage. Consequently a tragic poet could have no real experience of the needs of the theatre and was forced to follow the rules blindly. The one hope was that some prince interested in tragedy would maintain a company of tragic actors to give regular performances in a regular theatre. Then Italian tragedy might look forward to a share of the success which Italian opera had achieved throughout Europe. Unfortunately, singers and comédiennes have in all ages had an attraction for reigning monarchs

[1] Concari, c. 7 ; Landau, II, 2.

denied to tragic actresses; and, interesting as are Calsabigi's views, something more would undoubtedly have been necessary to bring Italian tragedy the success of which he dreamed.

Yet a perfect fever for tragedy-writing, largely inspired by France, prevailed in Italy at this period. Gravina, Metastasio's patron, the great jurist to whose "Origines juris civilis" Montesquieu acknowledges his debt, published five tragedies in 1712. They are modelled strictly on Greek lines, but are utterly worthless. Many others, mostly learned professors, followed his example. As a rule, these productions were slavish imitations of Racine and Corneille. Jesuit fathers were especially prominent in the field, for performances of plays formed part of their educational system. Of these, Bettinelli was the most successful. He was the first to advocate Italian subjects for tragedy, though he never attempted them himself. Probably the traditions of the Society were too strong for him and in his "Gionata," "Serse," and others, he remained true to the old classical and Biblical themes. Gasparo Gozzi, however, was the author of a "Marco Polo" which was a disastrous failure.

Only three of these writers deserve a passing mention. Pier Jacopo Martelli (1665-1727),[1] a man of considerable culture, was a pioneer in the field of tragedy. He was the first to adopt the French model, which he considered more suitable to the modern stage than the Greek. He attributed

[1] See E. Bertana, "La Tragedia," in "Storia dei generi letterarii italiani," c. 7.

Italy's failure to produce great tragedies to the lack of a suitable metre for the purpose. This he sought to supply by the "Versi Martelliani," as they are called after him, though the metre is really as old as Ciullo d'Alcamo. It consists of two seven-syllabled verses, rhyming alternately, which he printed in long fourteen-syllabled lines and intended to produce the same effect as the French Alexandrine. His tragedies deal with the stock subjects—"Alceste," "Morte di Cicerone," "Sissaro," etc.,—but the metre is very ill-suited to dialogue. Indeed, his blank verse in the "Femia" was far better than his own tragic metre; and his sense of humour and playful love of satire, which often detract from the tragic dignity of his plays, found ample scope in that clever parody.

Antonio Conti (1677-1749) is interesting as one of the first Italians to mention Shakespeare, or "Sasper," as he calls him, in the Preface to his "Cesare." But Bertana declares[1] "there is not a trace of Shakespearian art or romanticism in one of his four tragedies," and it is certain that all he knew of "Julius Cæsar" was Buckingham's adaptation, which he follows closely in his play. From a note in his translation of the "Rape of the Lock" it would seem that he did not even know the name of the author of "Othello." He follows the French model and his preference for Roman subjects may be ascribed partly to tradition, partly to the opportunity they gave him of inculcating lofty moral lessons.

[1] "La Tragedia," p. 254.

More important is Scipione Maffei (1675-1755), whose once-famous " Merope " had a real influence on the development of the Italian theatre. He was an archæologist and a man of learning. He wrote " Merope " in a very short time, while busy with other matters, at the request of some friends whom he had told that no better subject for a tragedy could be found. It was produced at Modena in 1713 and proved a great success, being translated and played everywhere. Even Voltaire praised it, though rather grudgingly. Lessing discusses it at length in his " Hamburgische Dramaturgie " and prefers it to Voltaire's play on the same subject. Maffei held that the most successful plays are those which " make it their object to depict a single passion and give it vivid expression." In " Merope " he boldly abandons the love element and substitutes " a mother's love, the tenderest and fiercest of all passions." But it is not so much a normal mother's love as the extraordinary ferocity of this particular mother's love that impresses us. However, though the characterisation is not always consistent, and though Maffei describes rather than presents, " Merope " is by far the best Italian tragedy before Alfieri. The device of making Cresfonte's identity unknown to himself was adopted in all later versions of the story. Maffei is uninspired, but his unrhymed hendecasyllables banished Martelli's metre for ever from the stage. In fact, Martelli himself wrote better blank verse than Maffei in his " Femia," the skit on " Merope " already mentioned, in which he

endeavours to defend his own methods against these innovations. Encouraged by this success Maffei attempted to write a comedy, but it was a failure, as we should expect.

We now come to Vittorio Amedeo Alfieri[1] (1749-1803), the one important tragic poet of Italy, whose destiny Parini foresaw in his well-known sonnet.[2] Alfieri, like Goldoni, has left us an autobiography, the sincerity and truth of which makes it almost more necessary than Goldoni's for a complete understanding of the man and his work. He was born at Asti of "noble parents, in easy circumstances and honourable," he tells us, and the order of the words is significant of the writer. His mother, for whom he had the warmest affection, was many years younger than her husband, who died when the poet was only a year old. She then married again, and at the age of nine Alfieri was "caged up" in the Academy of Turin. Here he remained for eight years, working little and learning less, though it is probable that he exaggerates his ignorance in his autobiography. At fourteen, however, the arrangements of the institution left him virtually his own master. In 1766 he was freed from his prison and given a commission in the Asti regiment; but even the slight restraint of

[1] For Alfieri, see also Bertana, "La Tragedia," c. 8; de Sanctis, "Storia," II, c. 19; Bertana, "Vittorio Alfieri" [Torino, 1902].

[2] "Vedrassi
Cinger l'Italia omai quella corona
Che al suo crin glorioso unica manca."
"A Vittorio Alfieri."

discipline and the trifling duties required of an officer in those easy-going times were intolerable to him, though his vanity delighted in the uniform. So he obtained leave to travel.

He first toured through Italy, then visited France, England, Holland, Germany, Russia and Spain. But all his travels brought him was the satisfaction of his desire to be continually in motion. He took no pleasure in the sights or the life of the places he visited at this period and threw an autograph manuscript of Petrarch's contemptuously aside when it was shown him in the Ambrosian library at Milan. To be driving furiously in a post-chaise or galloping wildly through the country were his only delights. Peace he found nowhere, and he was always anxious to be off before he had had time to settle down, no matter where he was staying. Even Venice bored him, and he locked himself in his room there, a prey to terrible melancholy, instead of enjoying the gaiety of the place. He had as yet found no outlet for his tremendous energy except his passion for horses and one or two love affairs, notably one with Penelope Pitt, Lady Ligonier, the worthless daughter of Sir George Pitt, which ended in a duel and a divorce.

Of all the countries he visited, England was the only one besides Italy for which he felt any affection. "Not that I cared much for the men individually, though they are far preferable to the French, because they are more kindly and genial; but the character of the country, the simple manners, the beauty and modesty of the women, and especially

the equitable government and the genuine liberty which results from it—all this made me quite oblivious of the bad climate, the melancholy from which it is impossible to escape there, and the ruinous cost of living." And he speaks quite as enthusiastically of London itself. But these years of wandering were necessary to awaken his love of his country, and to make Alfieri a patriotic Italian at heart.

In 1772 he returned to Turin, where he led the usual idle life of the young men of his class, amusing his friends with little poems in poor French, "for talking Italian is positively contraband in an amphibious city like Turin," and Alfieri knew French far better than his own tongue. In Foscolo's "Jacopo Ortis," not published till 1802, a Milanese bookseller has no copy of Cellini's "Life," and at last informs Ortis, who has asked in vain for other well-known works, that he does not sell Italian books. So great was Alfieri's ignorance of Italian that at twenty-one he found it hard to understand Metastasio and he could only make out Petrarch with great difficulty. It is characteristic of his vanity that he insisted on speaking the few words of English he had just learnt, in the hope of being mistaken for an Englishman on his first tour when at Pisa, as he had heard so much of the greatness of England. It is also noticeable that, though he made four separate attempts, he never succeeded in mastering our language.

According to his own account it was while sitting up one night to nurse the fourth of the ladies who

had successively captivated his heart, when she was dangerously ill, in 1774, that he sketched out his first tragedy, "Cleopatra." He at once realised the utter inadequacy of his equipment for such a task. For several months he threw himself heart and soul into a course of grammar and the study of poetry. The result was the "Cleopatraccia," as he called it, which was performed at the Carignano theatre in Turin, on June 16th, 1775, and was well received. Alfieri had now found an object "and from that fatal evening my blood was fired with so fierce and consuming a desire to win a really deserved triumph on the stage" that no passion which had hitherto possessed him could be compared with it.

The first step was to remedy the ravages which years of idleness had committed in the scanty stock of French and Latin and Italian he had brought away from his early prison. Alfieri had been greatly impressed by Helvetius' "De l'esprit," which maintains that the difference in men's talents is very slight and that success in life depends almost entirely on the use they make of them. He had read quantities of French plays and novels and had seen the principal tragedies and comedies performed, though in his youth it was the comedies that had attracted him; and, of course, he was acquainted with Rousseau and Voltaire. Montaigne he had always liked. Machiavelli was the only Italian writer who had made any impression on him as yet. But Plutarch, whose acquaintance he had made while waiting for horses in Savona,

was the book of books to him. He read the lives again and again, with such violent shouts, tears, and even rage, that anyone who heard him in the next room would certainly have taken him for a lunatic, he tells us. But he saw that this was not enough. He set to work on Latin and Italian grammar, read Petrarch, Tasso, Dante and Ariosto and often learnt long passages by heart. He translated Latin authors, especially Tacitus, for whose style he had a great admiration and whose terseness he endeavoured to imitate. He had given up all his old friends and amusements, even his lady-love and his horses. In 1776 he went to Siena to accustom himself "to speak, hear, think and dream in Tuscan and nothing else for evermore." He had already, in the previous year, written his earliest tragedies, the first of which was "Filippo." He submitted the results to numerous friends, most of them professors in the University of Pisa, among them being the able Padre Paciaudi, for whom he had a great respect, and was astonished and amused at the difference in the comments and the advice he received.

In 1777, while at Florence, he made the acquaintance of Louisa Stolberg, Countess of Albany, wife of the Young Pretender, the "degno amore" under whose influence he was to remain for the rest of his days. Her rank, her sufferings and the difficulty of the enterprise must have attracted a man of Alfieri's character almost as much as her calm, gentle temperament, which was a complete contrast to his own. He was now in possession of

the two things—a worthy love and a noble work—which were necessary for his happiness. In order to be able to devote himself absolutely to these two interests he sold all his property in Piedmont to his sister, in return for an annuity, at a considerable loss and was thus freed from the interference with which his sovereign, acting upon his legitimate rights, so often troubled his nobles. His restless temperament kept him continually on the move. In 1785 he followed his lady to Paris and then to Alsace. But he was working hard the whole time. Between 1781 and 1783 he celebrated American independence in a number of odes, and in 1789 Didot published the final edition of his tragedies in Paris, where Alfieri also wrote the first part of his admirable autobiography, carrying it to the year 1790. The outbreak of the Revolution filled him with boundless enthusiasm, but, like so many others, he was soon disillusioned, and the Terror almost threw him into a panic. He fled from Paris back to Florence with the Countess of Albany in 1792 as fast as horses could take him. He had never loved the French, and their conduct on entering Italy, combined with the fact that he had lost property in France during the Revolution, filled him with a blind hatred of the whole nation which he afterwards vented in the " Misogallo."

With his usual energy he now set himself to learn Greek, and was soon able to read Homer and the principal poets. He also busied himself with translations from the Latin, and continued his Autobiography to the year 1803. He considered

that he deserved some reward for his Greek studies and therefore instituted the Order of Homer, with a special collar, and solemnly conferred it upon himself—a charmingly naïve story with which he closes his Autobiography. Five months later he passed peacefully away, leaving all his property to the Countess of Albany. She buried him worthily in Santa Croce in Florence where his monument is the work of Canova.

Fontani and Leopardi both considered Alfieri's chief importance to lie in his political opinions, and they are right, in the sense that his work is dominated and inspired by these opinions, and that it is impossible to understand him apart from them. They were the chief element in his own character, and he is the most subjective of writers. Not that he formulated a definite philosophy. He was a prophet whose mission it was to inspire others with enthusiasm for action, not an academic builder of systems. He provided the motive power for the great movement that was to come; it was for others to direct it to the proper channels. Tyranny of any kind he abominated. Hence Plutarch appealed to him as no other author ever did. He was thoroughly in sympathy with Brutus and Timoleon, and with the ideals of Plutarch's chief heroes. Metastasio could not have imagined a world without monarchy, but to Alfieri monarchy was unjust in its very nature. His two books "Della tirannide" (1777) give full expression to his views, and in his "Panegirico di Plinio a Trajano" he tries to show that when an ideal ruler arises the

only proof he can give of his noble qualities is to resign his power into the hands of the people. But Alfieri realised that an oligarchy or a democracy can be as tyrannical as any king, and he would therefore keep the executive entirely independent of the legislative authority, in order to insure the freedom of the latter.

Alfieri would not, however, extend the franchise below the educated and well-to-do classes. He held that a people which has been tryannised over for many years is not ripe for freedom till it has acquired civil and religious virtue by a long process of education. He was an aristocrat to the bone and would no more have renounced his title of Count, like Manzoni, than he would have renounced his property. A Republic was his ideal, but his admiration for the English constitution at this time and for the Roman senate in its best days, both of which were really aristocratic in character, shows the kind of government that he desired. His satires were the work of his later years, when disappointment with the Revolution had, as in so many other cases, considerably cooled his ardour for liberty. In these he emphasises his belief in the value of birth, for "the lion is not the rabbit," and in "Sesqui-plebe" he vents his scorn on the middle classes which were then rising into power, thanks to the increase of trade, for which Alfieri felt all an eighteenth century patrician's contempt. "The peasant, the backbone of every State, toils with innocent, industrious hands at work which brings no blush to his face. The great man, the rich man,

who does not work with his hands, spends what is his own. So he does no harm to others, and he is less dishonourable, because he is already in a higher position."[1] But you others, "non mezzo ceto, non, ma sesqui-plebe," "who feel the pinch of poverty and scorn the plough, as it scorns you, have lain the cross on other shoulders."[2]

Alfieri was now an ardent patriot. He warmly defended Italian literature and Italian customs against the prevailing craze for foreign fashions, and his indignation against the foreign rulers in the peninsula was unbounded, for he held that every country had a right to govern itself in its own way. Indeed he was one of the most enthusiastic champions of the rights of nationalities in his day. But though he realised the unity of the nation, he failed to conceive of Italy as a single country, not divided into small independent states. It was left for a later generation to grasp the full meaning of his dedication of his "Bruto Secondo" "al popolo italiano futuro," or of his sonnet, "Giorno verrà,"[3] or of his prophecies of the true resurrection of his country at the beginning of the "Misogallo."

[1] "Il contadin, che d'ogni stato è l'osso,
con la innocente, industre man si adopra
in lavori che il volto non fan rosso.
Il grande, il ricco la cui man null'opra,
spende il suo; quindi agli altri non nuoce;
ed è men sozzo perch'ei già sta sopra."

[2] " . . . . . Cui l'esser poveri pur cuoce,
e l'aratro sdegnate, e ch'ei vi sdegna,
bandita avete in su l'altrui la croce."

[3] "Giorno verrà, tornerà il giorno in cui
Redivivi omai gl'Itali staranno."

Alfieri was essentially a man of action who had the misfortune to be born in an age when action was impossible. Hence the misery of the years during which he was seeking an outlet for his pent-up energies. But he could speak and use the enthusiasm that burnt within him to rouse those who, like himself, were groaning under an oppressive tyranny to a consciousness of their shame and of the rights they had lost. This must be accomplished by simple and persuasive words, for simplicity alone can express burning passion. "Great words are not great things." Alfieri proposed to effect his purpose by means of his tragedies. He does not pretend to set life before us as it is. "He seeks for truth in consciousness," says Concari, "not in history, and the consciousness is his own. The result is a subjective and frankly Italian tragedy." But this was not his only object in writing tragedies. His vanity and thirst for fame made him eager to provide Italy with "the one crown" she lacked; and in spite of his poor equipment he accomplished the task he had set himself by sheer force of will.

For Alfieri the characters in a tragedy must be in an exalted station. He had nothing but contempt for the drama of everyday life that was becoming so popular. His love for Plutarch and sympathy with the lofty ideals of patriotism and virtue he inculcated led him to prefer the old classical stories already hallowed by centuries of tradition. He wrote nineteen tragedies in all. The first was "Filippo" (1775-6), the last "Bruto Secondo"

(1786-7). Of these only six—" Filippo," " Rosmunda," " Maria Stuarda," " Congiura dei Pazzi," " Don Garzia " and " Saul "—deal with other than classical subjects, and the characters in every case occupy distinguished positions.

His tragedies were usually sketched out in the excitement of the moment, nearly all of them, he tells us, " either in the act of listening to music or a few hours later." Then he would write out the whole play in prose, speeches and all, at fever heat, putting down every idea that entered his head. After this he versified the play at his leisure, selecting what seemed to him most suitable from his notes. He took the rules for tragedy just as he found them in his day as laid down in Horace's " Ars Poetica " without questioning them and he strictly observed the unities. But he would have none of the confidants of the French writers, none of the underplots of minor characters which he had found so trying to his patience in the plays he had witnessed in his youth. His plays begin when the plot is already far advanced. The action is simple and direct, the characters are few and the unrhymed hèndecassyllables broken and varied, entirely free from the monotony he found unendurable in the French Alexandrine.

The extraordinary brevity, terseness and even harshness of his style is thoroughly in keeping with his conception of tragedy. His first idea was to take Maffei's " Merope " as his model. Then he was attracted by the excellent unrhymed hendecasyllables of Cesarotti's version of Ossian, which

was so popular in Italy. The rugged scenery of the North and the gloom and pathos of the poem appealed to the strong vein of melancholy that underlay his nature. But his independence soon asserted itself and he developed a style that is essentially his own. Cesarotti, though he admired the tragedies, pointed out in a letter to Alfieri that this style, in spite of its energy and precision, was neither natural nor easy; and it was generally condemned. But the style was as much an outcome of Alfieri's character as the tragedies themselves. In his case, as always, form cannot be considered apart from content. "He wrote as he travelled," says de Sanctis,[1] "tearing along in a direct line; at the very start his thoughts were already at the end of his journey, devouring the intervening space. Words were not a means, but an impediment to his progress, and he cancels, contracts, transposes or shortens them; one word too much sets his blood boiling." He was continually cutting down his plays. "Filippo," which originally contained over 2,000 lines, has barely 1,400 in its final form. The well-known passage in "Filippo" became proverbial for its abruptness.[2] No wonder men whose ears were trained in mellifluous Arcadia failed to appreciate anything so terse, nervous and masculine.

[1] "Storia letter. ital." II, 405.

[2] *Fil.* Udisti? *Gom.* Udii. F. Vedesti? G. Io vidi.
F. O rabbia!
Dunque il sospetto? . . . *G.* È omai certezza. *F.* E inulto
Fillipo è ancora? *G.* Pensa. . . *F.* Pensai. Mi segui.
"Filippo IV, 5."

Needless to say, Alfieri entirely neglects natural characteristics and local colour. His Timoleone is no more Greek than his Maria Stuarda is Scotch. But, like many eighteenth century writers, he is most at home with Roman subjects. " Virginia " is one of his best plays, though his critics considered the murder of Icilio, Virginia's betrothed, a mistake, and pointed out that Virginio's not killing Claudio offends our sense of justice. But Alfieri replied that had Virginia's father killed Appio, her death would have been a brutal and wholly unnecessary murder. This is the first of his plays in which the people—Popolo—appears as a speaking character. " Bruto Secondo " is another favourite. " Filippo " suffers from its hero's weakness and from comparison with Schiller's " Don Carlos." " Merope " has been much admired, especially the recognition scene, which was, however, borrowed from Voltaire. " Oreste " and " Agamennone " are among Alfieri's successes. By making Clitennestra in love with Egisto to the very end he has added a new human element to the story and in de Sanctis' opinion the scene in which the latter suggests to Clitennestra that she should murder her husband is worthy of Shakespeare.[1] It certainly is admirable, but the inevitable comparison with Æschylus' great trilogy makes it difficult to judge these plays on their merits.

There is little variety in Alfieri's tragedies. When we have read one we have read all, for they are all constructed on the same lines, as their author himself pointed out. In every case the central

[1] " Storia," II, 413.

idea is a struggle against tyranny of some kind. In " Filippo " it is a struggle between Philip II and Carlo's love for Isabella, in " Merope " between a mother's love and Polifonte and so on. The heroes are headstrong to rashness, raging against tyranny in and out of season and almost entirely lacking in the self-restraint and the wisdom of the serpent that are necessary for carrying out any great purpose. They are, in fact, men like Alfieri himself. He tells us in the well-known sonnet describing himself that he is " always angry, though he never bears malice." [1] Consequently, as de Sanctis points out, his work is superficial. We look in vain for the calm, profound insight into life, the observation of all its shades and mysteries that produces a Hamlet. Alfieri sacrifices poetry to rhetoric, and every other consideration must give way to his dominant purpose. He tells Calsabigi that his object is to make men " free, brave and generous, carried away by real virtue, impatient of any violence, patriotic, fully conscious of their own rights, fierce, honourable and magnanimous in all their passions." In fact, he considers the moral aims of his plays more important than the æsthetic, and cares little about individuality in the characterisation. Sismondi declares that we can say of Metastasio's dramas that the action takes place in the theatre ; of Alfieri's, that it takes place nowhere.

Two of his plays stand on a rather different footing from the others. In both the power with

[1] " Irato sempre, non maligno mai." " Il proprio ritratto."

which the hero or heroine is at war is divine, and the result is a softening of character which makes these tragedies the most human and most appealing he has written. Mirra's incestuous passion in the play that bears her name (1784-6) is caused by Venus, through her mother's fault, and the heroic struggle she makes against it arouses our sympathy from the first. But " Saul " is Alfieri's masterpiece. It is unlike any of his other plays, and, with the exception of " Merope," the only one which he wrote without effort. Concari suggests that its comparative calm reflects the calm of the life which Alfieri was then leading in Rome (1782-4). As is usual in his tragedies, Saul does not appear till the second act. Alfieri himself ascribed the play's success to the length to which he had carried the internal struggle between two opposite passions in the same man. He was not religious, though he strongly condemned the attitude of the Encyclopædists towards Christianity, and he thoroughly sympathised with Saul in his contest with the priesthood. But David, as God's instrument, is utterly unlike the tyrants who usually form the opposition in Alfieri's tragedies. His loyalty to Saul and his love for Jonathan and his wife, Micol, gain our affections from the first. The third act, in which he soothes the king's troubled spirit in a magnificent lyric, which probably owes something to Dryden's " Alexander's Feast," till an unfortunate allusion rouses all the old hatred against him, is really noble. In " Saul " Alfieri is warm and human. He relaxes the strained meagreness of his other

plays. The characters are less stiff and monotonous, and he seems to find more to develop both in them and in the action.

Alfieri's tragedies were at first discouraged by the authorities and were seldom acted, but as the new ideas spread men realised that he voiced them as no one else had done. When played by great actors, his heroes, struggling against tyranny, roused the wildest patriotic enthusiasm during the stirring days of the transition period and the Risorgimento. Historically Alfieri was undoubtedly of greater importance than any other writer of the eighteenth century. His tragedies were, in fact, of more political than æsthetic value, for he cannot be ranked among the world's great tragic poets; and in the sense that he was the first distinguished writer to dedicate his literary gifts to the national cause he may be said to have initiated the new movement. To Carducci[1] the question whether he created a national tragedy seemed purely academic; "he revived poetry, he created the Italian revolution."

But the tragedies were only a portion of the work accomplished by Alfieri during his busy life. In the 1789 edition of these he announced his wise decision to abandon the Muses before they abandoned him. But nine years later he produced a poor "Alceste," and a mixed drama, "Abele," which he called a "tramelogedia." At the very end of his life he wrote "L'uno," "I pochi," "I troppi," three comedies which expose the tyranny

[1] Op. Vol. I, p. 299.

of monarchies, aristocracies and democracies, and "L'antidoto," advocating a kind of constitutional monarchy as a solution of the difficulty. Needless to say, he has no turn for comedy and the plays are dull and poor. The "Finestrina," which claims to show us the secret springs of action in a man's heart, is better. But "Il divorzio," a satire on the family life of the day, is the least unsuccessful.

The famous "Vita" is the most characteristic of the other works. Alfieri somewhere describes himself as one of the least untruthful men he knows, and his autobiography is remarkably honest and straightforward. If anything he is inclined to exaggerate the shadows of the picture; but he admits that he does not always tell us the whole truth. The book proves the exactness with which the tragedies reflect his own character. He never loses sight of his purpose of portraying himself and nothing but himself. There are no digressions, no attempts to describe surroundings or to draw other characters, such as charm us in Goldoni or in Carlo Gozzi. Everything is shown us in its relation to Alfieri, and we are allowed to see it in no other light. Yet the vividness and the sincerity of the writer, to say nothing of the interest of the story, make the book delightful reading, and Alfieri's stay in Tuscany has purged his style of the Cinquecento affectations that mar his early prose works. Of these, the chief are the "Del principe e delle lettere" (1778-86), maintaining that a man of letters must keep himself independent of the patronage of the great, and the "Della tirannide"

(1777), already mentioned. His letters and diaries have been published and form a valuable supplement to the "Vita."

Alfieri also wrote "L'Etruria Vendicata" (1780-86), a poem in *ottava rima*, celebrating Lorenzino dei Medici, who killed Duke Alessandro. His "rime," especially his sonnets, are often of a high order, and in these his natural melancholy finds full expression, They give expression to his views on the state of Italy at this time and contain frequent attacks on tyranny and cowardice of all kinds, very similar to those in the tragedies. The love-sonnets to the Countess of Albany are less individual. They are obviously imitated from Petrarch, and we miss the personal note that is rarely absent from his other work.

In his later years Alfieri produced a number of satires, chiefly in "capitoli," upon all his pet aversions—kings, cicisbei, the middle-class, etc. They abound in fierce invective and abuse, but are lacking in wit and are not pleasant reading. They are not to be compared with those of Gozzi or Parini. "L'Educazione" is certainly the best. The epigrams are more successful, for Alfieri was nothing if not terse. The "Misogallo" is the best known of his satires. Here he gives vent to all his pent-up hatred of the French, which had been enormously increased, since his early contempt for his dancing-masters, by the French Revolution. The first two books explain Alfieri's reason for writing the work, while the third is a satirical speech supposed to have been delivered to the Convention

by Louis XVI. The last two consist of biting, even coarse epigrams. Alfieri was inordinately proud of the "Misogallo," but it is too violent to be effective.

Before leaving Alfieri we must mention "Socrate, tragedia una di V.A.," bearing the imprint of London, a clever parody of his manner, all long speeches, and terse dialogue, with no action and with only three characters—Socrates, Xanthippe and Plato.

Alfieri stands alone. He left no school and no successors. After his death the French "comédie larmoyante" carried all before it in Italy.[1] Richardson was its true father, and Pamela, whom even Goldoni brought on the stage, became one of the most popular characters in Europe. De Sanctis points out that it proclaimed the rights of man against society. Tragedy and comedy meet as in Menander. The interest is transferred from character to circumstances. It is not jealousy or avarice, but the son, the merchant, the servant-girl, each in their own surroundings, who are set before us. Federici's bourgeois comedies, though displaying a wider knowledge of the world than Goldoni's, cannot be compared with them. But they were popular in their day. Nor has Giovanni Gamerra (1743-1803) much merit. His life is interesting, for he was by turns an abate, a soldier and one of the most successful playwrights of his time.

Tragedy, on the other hand, was growing more and more romantic in character. Modern or

[1] See E. Masi, "Sulla storia del teatro italiano nel secolo XVIII." (Firenze, 1891.)

mediæval subjects were preferred, and some degree of historical accuracy was expected. Ossian and the German theatre were making themselves felt, and Shakespeare was beginning to be appreciated. Alfieri had read translations of some of his tragedies, but soon abandoned them, as he always did plays which attracted him so much that he was afraid of being influenced by them. Alessandro Verri published prose versions of "Hamlet" and "Othello," so that it is not surprising to find that when he wrote his "Congiura di Milano," a play on the conspiracy of 1476, in which Galeazzo Maria Sforza perished, he showed no respect for the famous unities. Verri here preaches Alfieri's gospel of resistance to tyranny. The well-known patroness of letters, Giustina Renier Michiel, translated "Othello," "Macbeth" and "Coriolanus" between 1798-1800. Giovanni Pindemonte (1751-1812), Ippolito's elder brother, began as an imitator of Alfieri, but soon came under the influence of the new school. He was a born fighter and led a wild life in his youth; his plays have plenty of action, numerous characters and elaborate scenic effects, but the style is commonplace, and they are purely popular. Though he neglects the unity of place, he generally respects the other two. "Ginevra di Scozia," taken from the "Orlando Furioso," and the "Baccanali" are probably the best of his ten plays. "Cianippo," the last of them, has merit. Their exuberant life and energy amply explain their temporary popularity.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NAPOLEONIC PERIOD—MONTI AND FOSCOLO

If Parini had paved the way for the moral regeneration of Italy and Alfieri for the political, it was to the French Revolution that she owed her first taste of liberty and self-government. But, as de Sanctis puts it,[1] the country was still literary rather than political in its interests, still placed form above matter. Men applauded Alfieri, but were not roused to action by him. National ideas had progressed further than national character. This first independence had not been won by a struggle; it was not the result of a spontaneous rising; it had been imposed upon Italy from without. "My Italy will not raise her feeble form from the ground," sings Giovita Scalvini in "L'Esule," "without the mighty arm of her peasantry." This movement did not suffice to give men a serious purpose. Poetry still had the false Arcadian note. Brutuses and Catos were never more common, but they were "paper Brutuses and Catos" who swore to shed the last drop of their blood for the cause, but hastened to make their peace with the returning Austrians the moment the French had left.

But a restoration of the old governments did not mean a restoration of the old order of things. The seed had been sown and was bound to bear fruit.

[1] Ugo Foscolo, in "Nuovi Saggi Critici."

Austria was no longer the champion of progress and enlightenment, but of repression and stagnation. Italy had become conscious of herself as a nation, and unity and independence were soon the goals towards which all that was best in the land was struggling. Just as in the Middle Ages the ideal was religious, as at the Renaissance it was æsthetic, so now it had become political. Hence it is impossible to separate literature from politics, for the idea of Italian unity gradually becomes the dominant note in the one as in the other. Any student of the literature of the first half of last century will soon learn to look instinctively for the reference to the national cause that explains the surprising success often obtained by an otherwise commonplace poem or play. He will realise that a new standard was gradually established which judged literature by the stimulus it gave to the cause of unity rather than by its artistic merits. And though as yet the national movement can hardly be said to have come into existence, it was during the Napoleonic era that it first began to take definite shape.

This transition period is noticeable for a steady revival of the classical influence in poetic form, while even in content classicism recovered much lost ground.[1] Its most typical representative in

[1] Zanella gives an amusing instance of the effect of the Revolution on the Arcadian verse of the day—

> " Fra pochi istanti, o Fillide,
> farò ritorno a te
> col teschio esangue e pallido
> d'un inimico re."

every way was Vincenzo Monti (1754-1828),[1] who has to some extent become its scapegoat. Every movement in politics is reflected in his work, for the consistency with which he changed his views would have put the Vicar of Bray himself to shame, and the changes were generally so rapid that he left almost all his more important poems unfinished. Born near Fusignano, he was sent to the seminary at Faenza, where he early showed a taste for Latin poetry. It was soon obvious that he had no vocation for the priesthood, and in 1777 he went to Ferrara to study law; but the law also disgusted him, so he tried medicine, with no better results. At last he definitely settled down to study the Latin and Italian classics and the great Greek writers in translations. He was popular in cultivated circles, to which his personal charm and his gift for producing Arcadian verse in Frugoni's manner won him ready admission. He had considerable powers of description and at this time his work was strongly influenced by the Old Testament writers, especially by the Psalms and Isaiah. Indeed, he placed David above all other poets. The "Visioni d'Ezechiello" (1776-7), imitated to a great extent from Varano's "Visions," was the result of these early tendencies.

But Monti was not satisfied with Ferrara, and at last, in 1778, he received his father's permission to try his fortune in Rome. In the following year

[1] Landau, II, 4; Zanella, "Storia della letter. ital. dalla metà del settecento ai giorni nostri." c. 5; E. Masi in "Vita italiana durante la rivoluzione francese e l'impero."

appeared the first edition of his poems. Also to 1779 belongs the "Prosopopea di Pericle," celebrating the discovery of a bust of Pericles and reflecting the interest in classical art and archæology which Winckelmann and Visconti had aroused. This poem, when recited to the Arcadians in the Bosco Parrasio, created a sensation and ensured Monti's position in Roman society, to which he had already obtained the entrée under the patronage of Cardinal Scipione Borghese. His "Bellezza dell'Universo," a poem in *terza rima* in honour of the marriage of Count Luigi Braschi, the Pope's nephew, with the beautiful Costanza Falconieri, which was to some extent inspired by Milton and was also recited in Arcadia, procured him the post of Secretary to the bridegroom in 1781. He continued to live the life of a man of fashion at the Papal court, where he was extremely popular with the Pope and his nephew, and above all, with the latter's beautiful wife, with whom he is said to have carried on an intrigue. By 1783, when a second and larger edition of his poems was published, he was generally recognised as the leading fashionable poet of his day.

Monti's art was almost as varied as his politics. He does not seem to have had any firm convictions of his own, and he drew his inspiration now from one of his great predecessors, now from another. The literary adventurers of the eighteenth century had made cosmopolitanism the rule, and Monti's taste was wonderfully catholic, embracing all nations and all schools, as we shall see in the course

of our survey of his work. This extraordinary versatility and power of absorbing and reproducing with finished art any impression, however foreign, is at once his strength and his weakness. Soon after 1782 he began the " Feroniade " in honour of Pius VI's journey to Vienna and of the draining of the Pomptine Marshes. The Pope loved such grandiose undertakings, but in this instance he failed. The subject is the love of Jupiter for Feronia, a nymph of Terracina, and Juno's jealousy. Like most of Monti's longer poems it was never completed, though he was at work upon it at intervals for the rest of his life, but his classical culture nowhere appears to better advantage. It shows a strong, genuine love of nature, while the descriptions, such as those of the garden and the flowers in the first canto, are exquisitely delicate. The unrhymed hendecasyllables are nearly perfect, possessing an ease and grace which is a distinct advance on the comparative stiffness of Parini and Alfieri, in whose verse the effort can always be felt. Giordani even declared that the " Feroniade " proved Monti to be the greatest living poet in Europe. The Ode to Montgolfier belongs to 1784. Needless to say, Monti came under the influence of Young, and even of Werther, as we see from the blank verse to Prince Chigi and the " Pensieri d'amore " (1783), which celebrate his passion for the beautiful Falconieri.

Monti had heard Alfieri read " Virginia," and had possibly seen others of his tragedies acted during the poet's stay in Rome. Consequently he was fired

with a desire to write plays himself.[1] In 1786 his "Aristodemo," obviously inspired by Alfieri, gained a prize at Parma. There is hardly any action. The play contains little more than Aristodemo's struggle with his remorse for having sacrificed his daughter's life to his ambition. The sentimentality, the continual lamentations and the presence of his daughter's tomb, dominating the play upon the stage, are, as Bertana[2] points out, distinct signs of "Ossianism." Goethe, who saw the play in Rome, spoke well of it, and it is certainly the best tragedy upon the subject. The ghost is obviously a reminiscence of Shakespeare, whose influence is still more marked in "Galeotto Manfredi," which was read in Rome in 1788. Zambino is borrowed from Iago, and "Henry VIII," as well as "Othello," have been laid under contribution for other parts of the play. Monti had always admired Shakespeare, calling him "the greatest painter of nature," and this admiration amounted to enthusiasm in his later years, when Shakespeare was the fashion. But the plays are constructed on classical lines, and the unities duly respected. For "Caio Gracco" (1778-1800), certainly the best of his plays, he is indebted to G. M. Chénier's tragedy. The versification is excellent and the play was a geniune stage success when produced at Milan in 1802. The references to Italy[3] insured its popularity for many years to come. "Caio

[1] Bertana, "La Tragedia," c. 9.
[2] "La Tragedia," p. 337.
[3] "Itali siam tutti, un popol solo" etc, III, 3.

Gracco " is, indeed, a great and solemn protest against Jacobinism, upholding the real hero who will govern by law " with justice and love." " Death to no one," exclaims Gracchus when the people call for Opimius' blood. But even here there is more talk than action. Monti's debt to Shakespeare is much greater in this play, especially to " Coriolanus " and to " Julius Cæsar." The scene in Act IV, where Opimius tries to rouse the people by a speech over Africanus' dead body, is taken almost entirely from the famous scene in the latter play.

In 1791 Monti married the beautiful Teresa Pichler, who was many years younger than himself. By her he became the father of Costanza, who, with all her beauty, inherited much of Monti's weakness of character, though she was tenderly loved by him to the end. Monti had at first been a warm supporter of the Revolution, but the Terror completely changed his views. In 1793 Hugues Bassville, Secretary to the French legation in Naples, who had come to Rome to carry on revolutionary propaganda there, was stabbed to death in the streets. This event inspired the " Bassvilliana," a poem in *terza rima* which represents Bassville as pardoned by God for the part he had taken in the Revolution on condition that his soul should not be received into bliss until it had witnessed the complete fulfilment of the crimes in which he had taken part on earth. When we remember that Monti had known the unfortunate Bassville and sympathised with his aims, we are not altogether

edified with this treatment of his dead ally. However, Monti has made the best of the opportunity thus given him for describing the execution of Louis XVI, who is represented as little less than a saint, and the horrors of the Terror. As Zumbini points out, the whole plan is borrowed from Klopstock's "Messiah," while Monti's indebtedness to the Bible, to Dante and to Varano is obvious. Indeed, Monti owes much to Varano, whose "Visioni" first taught him to appreciate Dante. In the "Bassvilliana" Voltaire, Rousseau and the Encyclopædists appear among the evil spirits who come to gloat over the King's dead body. Monti, unlike Dante, rashly ventured to prophesy things before the event, with unfortunate results. The Pope, to whom the poem was dedicated, found the Dantesque style detestable and recited one of Metastasio's airs to show how it should have been written. The first four cantos were composed between May and August, 1793, with the greatest care, but by this time the political situation and Monti's views had undergone so complete a change that the poem remained a fragment.

In this same year, while the French were beginning their victorious advance, he was at work upon another classical poem, the "Musogonia," which was to describe the origin and various wanderings of the Muses. It was written in *ottava rima*, but only two cantos were ever completed. The first of them ended with a eulogy of the Emperor Francis II, as the great opponent of the French. Four years later the poem was republished in one canto,

preceded by a glowing panegyric on Napoleon. The establishment of the Cisalpine Republic had reawakened all the enthusiasm for liberty which a man so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of ancient Rome as Monti might be expected to feel, though the excesses of the Terror had temporarily cooled his ardour. Bonaparte now became for Monti the Apostle of universal freedom, and we find him leaving Rome in the carriage of the French general who had brought thither the treaty of Tolentino.

Unfortunately, there was still the " Bassvilliana," the most important anti-revolutionary poem that had yet appeared in Italy, to damage him in the eyes of his new friends. But Monti was always absolutely convinced of the truth of his latest opinions and he set about the task of clearing himself with the proverbial renegade's violence, He declared that the poem had been written to conceal his real feelings from the Papal Government and proceeded to prove the genuine character of his conversion by diatribes on the Vatican and the enemies of France in " Il Fanatismo," " La Superstizione " and " Il Pericolo," all in *terza rima,* and in " Prometeo," a poem in blank verse dedicated to " Citizen Napoleon Bonaparte," who is the new Prometheus resisting the tyranny of kings. Only one canto appeared in the poet's lifetime. It describes the sufferings of humanity before the hero arose ; but even the two cantos which were published posthumously barely begin the subject. The verse, however, is fine and sonorous. These poems were all published in 1797, as was also the

ode, " Per il Congresso d'Udine," one of the best of Monti's lyrics. He had now settled in Milan, but his position there was far from enviable. His success had made him many enemies and his unfortunate zeal for the cause that attracted him for the moment gave them their opportunity. The " Bassvilliana " was publicly burnt in Milan, a fate it richly deserved at the hands of the Republicans, and in 1798 a law was passed, aimed directly at Monti, excluding from office everyone who had written against the Republic after 1792, the first year of liberty. But the law remained a dead letter, for Monti held various government appointments. On this occasion he was warmly defended in a pamphlet by the young Ugo Foscolo. But Monti was not discouraged. For January 21st, 1799, the anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI, he wrote an ode to be sung in the Scala at Milan, in which the saintly king of earlier days is " Vile Capet, the perjurer who wearied heaven." The statement that " all lips were silent at thy fate " comes a little strangely from the author of the " Bassvilliana." This was the year of the overthrow of the young Republic by Russia and Austria. Monti fled to Paris with his wife, but the fame of the " Bassvilliana " had preceded him, and he found it hard to live. However, he refused a post at the Collége de France.

The battle of Marengo opened Italy to him once more. The well-known " canzonetta," in which he celebrated the event, " Bella Italia, amate sponde," is the best and most spontaneous of all his

lyrics. His real love for his country and his joy at seeing it again vibrate through every line. In 1801 the first canto of the "Mascheroniana," a vision in *terza rima* of the same kind as the "Bassvilliana," only more restrained, was published. The style is admirable and the poet has a greater mastery over the metre, which is more varied than in the earlier work. The five cantos he completed are generally considered among the best things he wrote. The distinguished mathematician, Mascheroni, who had died while Monti was in Paris, meets Parini, Verri, Beccaria and other distinguished Lombards in Paradise and tells them of Napoleon's career and of the state of their own country. Here as in "Caio Gracco," which was finished about this time, Monti gives full vent to his hatred of the demagogism from which he had suffered so much. "Love of liberty," he says,[1] "is beautiful, if lodged in a gentle heart, but if in one that is vile and base, it is no virtue, but madness and crime." England, Napoleon's most dangerous enemy, is violently attacked as the grasping traitor that drains India of its gold. The poem has never been so popular as the "Bassvilliana." It is less dramatic, but the characterisation is far better, and the political opinions have a more genuine ring, while such scenes as that of the meeting of the three great Lombards already mentioned, at the end of the third canto, are admirable.

[1] "L'amor di libertà, bello, se stanza
ha in cor gentile, e se in cor basso e lordo,
non virtù, ma furor e scelleranza."

Monti regarded Napoleon as the champion of this moderate liberalism. In 1800 he was made Professor of Eloquence and Poetry at Pavia, and he celebrated most of the chief political events of the next few years in his lyrics. His "Teseo," a dramatic allegory in honour of the Emperor of the French, was performed on June 3rd, 1804. In the following year he was made "Poeta del Governo Italiano" and Assessor for Literature and the Fine Arts, with handsome salaries. Needless to say Monti's enthusiasm for the Napoleon who had founded the Italian Republic was duly transferred to Napoleon, King of Italy. The "Beneficio," in honour of Napoleon's coronation in 1805, is a fine poem in *terza rima* celebrating Italy's delivery from oppression by the great conqueror. Dante bids the poet put entire faith in the new king, and, needless to say, he took the advice given. The next few years were, in fact, among the most successful in Monti's life. Milan had now become a brilliant centre. Stendhal, Byron, Sismondi, and Madame de Staël were all there. Monti was the object of the latter lady's passionate adoration during her stay in 1805, and always appeared on her right at her dinners. Once, at a large dinner in 1816, the opening of the "Mascheroniana" was declared, after some discussion, to be the finest poetry of the day in Europe. Byron was present and was visibly moved when Monti recited the canto chosen amid loud applause. It is not surprising to find such a social lion made Historian of the Kingdom with an increased salary in 1806.

Monti now devoted all his powers to the singing of Napoleon's glory. " I am touching Pindar's chords for the Emperor Napoleon," he told Cesarotti in this very year. " The Government has ordered me to do so and I must obey." On this occasion he deserted Varano for Gray, Ossian, Klopstock and the bardic poetry of the North. " Il Bardo della Selva Nera " is the story of a young French officer, who is cured of his wounds by Ulino, a German bard, and his daughter, who falls desperately in love with him. He gives the two an account of Napoleon's career. Many of the incidents are admirably described in Monti's beautifully finished *terza* and *ottava rima* and the narrative is varied by bardic songs introduced as in Cesarotti's " Ossian." The criticisms of bardic poetry, which offended Monti's classical taste, sound strange on Ulino's lips. The greater part of the poem appeared in 1806, but it is not one of Monti's best. Nor are " La Spada di Federico " (1806), " Api Panacridi in Alvisopoli " (1811), and other poems written to order during these years. This adulation of Napoleon is redeemed to some extent by the frequency with which Monti couples his name with Italy, " which touches the Alps on one side and on the other the promontory of Lilybæum."

He now began his translation of the " Iliad," which is a masterpiece of its kind and has sometimes been considered his best work. He had translated Voltaire's " Pucelle " in Paris, but he always expressed his regret for what he had done, and had the original manuscript burnt before his death.

In 1803 he had finished a version of Persius. Monti knew very little Greek and was obliged to rely on earlier translations, even on Cesarotti's "improved" rendering. But he was otherwise well suited for the task. As impressionable as wax, he was altogether under the influence of the author upon whom he was at work at the moment. Hence his "Iliad," especially the second edition of 1812, in which he was assisted by Foscolo and other friends who were good Greek scholars, is certainly the best in Italian. His intuition is wonderful. He is accurate without being slavish and the blank verse is excellent. In fact, he has solved the problem once and for all of turning the "Iliad" into a really Italian poem without losing the spirit of the original. This work represents Monti's definite adherence to the classical as opposed to the romantic school. But he remained loyal to Dante and the Bible.

On the fall of the Italian kingdom, in 1814, Monti was ready to welcome the returning Austrians, who retained his services—for his abilities would be useful—at a much reduced salary. Whereupon he affected to see the only hope for the regeneration of the country in Austrian rule. It is not so much the change in Monti's opinions that disgusts us as the eagerness with which he rushes to kick the masters he has just been flattering the moment they are down. The poems with which he strove to efface the effects of the "Bassvilliana" are not more servile than the "Mistico omaggio" (1815) and the "Ritorno d'Astrea" (1816). In the "Invito a

Pallade" (1819) he turns on Napoleon, who had loaded him with honours, with revolting shamelessness. But Austria had no love for the aged poet and his friendship for Perticari, who had married his beautiful, cultivated daughter, increased their suspicions. The romanticists had hoped to win him, but he stoutly championed the old classical school in the "Sermone sulla mitologia" (1825), the last poem he ever wrote, to which we shall refer later. Pellico and Berchet tried to make him a "carbonaro." He was thoroughly disgusted with the Austrians, who had reduced him to poverty, and it is possible that age would not have prevented him from seeking another redeemer of Italy to sing, had he seen any prospect of success. Perticari's death in 1822, and the scandal to which his beautiful widow's conduct gave rise, embittered her father's later life; but, though paralysed for two years, he lived on till 1828.

Monti has often been compared to a mirror, reflecting all the political and literary influences of a time of transition; and for this reason a study of his work, if not altogether edifying, is peculiarly interesting. "He lacks passion, fire, true, deep feeling," says Leopardi. "He is the poet of the ear, not of the heart." Or, to quote del Lungo, he possesses "a wonderful poetical imagination without the soul of a citizen." Classicism is the one influence to which he remained true all his life, and to the last he was polishing the "Feroniade." But he is a true artist, and his extraordinarily fine literary sense and intuition make it impossible for him to

fail altogether in any of the forms he adopted. His blank verse especially has a lightness and ease that was quite new in Italy, combined with a full, sonorous ring that suggests Frugoni, whom he had imitated in his youth. But he had no strong personality like Alfieri or Parini, and, as Rossi points out, his imagination sought its food in literature and life, not in himself. His want of character is seen in his inability to complete any of his longer poems. He added nothing to the thought of his time, but he is an admirable embodiment of it none the less, and he fanned into a brighter flame and handed on to Leopardi the torch of classicism which he had received from Alfieri and Parini. Carducci once said that a beautiful verse, like a beautiful woman, is forgiven anything, and so true a classicist felt all a poet's sympathy for Monti, in spite of his defects as a citizen. "When the literary history of the great century for Italy that lies between 1750 and 1850 comes to be written with objective impartiality and without party spirit," he declared, "Vincenzo Monti will once again take the place that is his due as the artistic leader of a whole generation of great ability, as the man who carried on and widened the old traditions of Italy, who revived the spirit of classicism in the best sense of that term."

Ippolito Pindemonte (1753-1828)[1] was possessed of a gentle melancholy which brought him into close sympathy with the Northern poets of his day,

[1] Landau, II, 4. Zanella, "Storia della letter. ital. dalla seconda metà, del secolo XVIII ai giorni nostri," c. 5.

Gray and Young, Collins and Cowper, Gessner and Klopstock, a sympathy which was only increased by his extensive travels. Alfieri befriended him in Paris and was duly appointed "washerman" of his works. He began his career with "Arminio," a tragedy on the old classical lines, varied with bardic songs, the scene being laid in a wood in the territory of the Cherusci. He was never an enthusiast for Shakespeare, whom he called a "sublime child." He was a dandy who prided himself on his dancing, but took little interest in politics, for he held with Goldsmith that changes of government make little difference to the average man. His "Lettera di una monaca a Federico IV, re di Danimarca" in *terza rima* is obviously suggested by Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard," while for his "Abaritte," a tale containing much kindly satire on the countries he has visited, he is equally indebted to "Rasselas." Indeed, he fully shared Alfieri's love of all things English, more especially of the ladies and the parks and gardens. The romantic tale, "Antonio Foscarini," is spoilt by the poor quality of the *ottava rima*. His "Poesie campestri" (1788), rather melancholy descriptions of cultivated park-scenery, especially of England, which were much admired in their day, are good of their kind. Pindemonte's love of the country and hatred of the town was genuine. But his "Sepolcri" is certainly his best work. In 1806 he began an elaborate poem protesting against the neglected state of churchyards in Italy, but abandoned it on hearing that Foscolo was busy with a poem on

the same subject. Foscolo's famous poem, dedicated to himself, did not seem to him to have exhausted the question, so he wrote this "Sermone," which he dedicated in turn to Foscolo. Like most of Pindemonte's work it lacks internal unity and is at best second-rate, but the description of English parks, though rather dragged in by main force, is excellent and is often quoted. His later years (1809-1822) were devoted to his translation of the Odyssey, which is much admired, and is the best in the language. Zamella considered it overrated, as the hendecasyllables are stiff. It fails to suggest the original and is far inferior to Monti's "Iliad."

Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827)[1] was the most important poet of his day, and his influence on the young men of the generation that succeeded him was second only to that of Alfieri. His father came of a Venetian family settled in the island of Zante, of which his mother, to whom he was devoted, was a native. His early years were spent in "the holy city of Zacynthus," for which he always cherished a warm affection, as is shown by his sonnet and by the famous lines in the "Sepolcri." Here, to his misfortune, he "worshipped the divinity of Venus as a boy." He was christened Niccolò, but later changed his name to Ugo. In 1792, about four years after his father's death, his mother settled in Venice with her three sons of whom Ugo was the eldest, and her daughter.

[1] Graf, "Foscolo, Manzoni e Leopardi." F. de Sanctis in "Nuovi saggi critici." G. Chiarini, in "Vita italiana durante la rivoluzione," etc.

In Zante he had acquired some knowledge of ancient Greek and given ample proof of his unruly character. Nor did Venice change him. He continued to study the classics and to train his taste, more especially with Homer, the Greek lyrists, Tacitus and Dante. He also made the acquaintance of the Encyclopædists and became a warm admirer of Alfieri. He paid irregular visits to Padua, where he attended Cesarotti's lectures, and even became intimate with him. He was neither an enthusiast for Ossian, nor a follower of Cesarotti, but the friendship cannot have been without influence upon him. Of course Foscolo soon wrote Arcadian verse with Savioli, Vittorelli and Bertòla for his models, but he did not altogether escape Young's melancholy.

At eighteen he was a well-known figure in Venice, ugly and awkward, but full of fire, boasting of his poverty, proud of his talents and confident of success. In spite of his old green coat he was welcomed in drawing-rooms and won the passing love of Isabella Teotocchi, the reigning beauty of Venice, fourteen years older than himself. In 1797 his tragedy, "Tieste," scored a brilliant success there, though it cannot be said to possess great merits. Foscolo dedicates it to Alfieri, declaring that "for simplicity of structure and severely restrained dialogue the tragedies of the ancients, and therefore those of Alfieri, are the only models"; and he is indebted to Alfieri not merely for his style, but even for his view of the characters. As in Alfieri's plays, Atreus is the typical tyrant,

Thyestes the wronged champion of justice and liberty. Foscolo is the only one of Alfieri's disciples who at all resembled the master in character. But the success of " Tieste " was largely due to political reasons.

In this same year he went to Bologna, as the Venetian government found him too republican, and there he wrote his ode to " Bonaparte Liberatore." But he returned in October, on the establishment of popular rule, and became a member of the provisional government. The cession of Venice to Austria by the Treaty of Campo-Formio was a terrible blow to Foscolo. In the letter to Napoleon, prefixed to the reprint of his ode in 1799, he urges him to wipe out the memory of this disgrace by helping Italy. He withdrew to Milan, the capital of the Cisalpine Republic, where he made the acquaintance of the aged Parini and of Monti, whom, as we have seen, he defended in a pamphlet, though they afterwards quarrelled. Here he also conceived a desperate, but hopeless passion for Monti's beautiful wife, and from the accounts that have reached us, Foscolo in love must indeed have been a terrible object. He contributed literary articles to the " Monitore Italiano " and protested in a sonnet against the discontinuance of the teaching of Latin in the schools. In 1799 he pleaded the cause of Italian independence with General Championnet and fought bravely against the Austrians and Russians. He was wounded and taken prisoner, and then, like most of the Italian patriots, he served under Massena during the siege of Genoa.

Though the complete authorised edition of Foscolo's romance " Le Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis " did not appear till 1802, the year of Madame de Staël's " Delphine " and Chateaubriand's " René," it was written in its original form at this time, and a portion of it was actually published in Bologna while Foscolo was at the front. He was one of the first Italians to take the national ideals seriously, and the surrender of Venice to Austria, following upon an unusually serious love affair, had reduced him to a state of utter desperation. Isabella Roncioni, whom he met in Florence in 1801, but was unable to marry, as she was betrothed to another, seems to have been the one woman for whom he can be said to have had a genuine passion, and the case bears a striking resemblance to that of Ortis. But at least four ladies contributed to the experiences of the final edition of the letters. To one of them—Antonietta Fagnani—he wrote, " I have faithfully portrayed myself with all my weaknesses in Ortis." " He is there," says de Sanctis,[1] " as nature and education, illusions and disillusions had made him. There we have Venice betrayed, Isabella lost, the memory of Luisa and of his mother and friends, the man without a country, without a family, without a God," a complete national tragedy in a complete individual tragedy. Foscolo took the name of a student who had committed suicide for unknown reasons and identified himself with him. The story is simple. Ortis flies to the Euganean Hills after the cession of Venice and falls

[1] " Nuovi saggi critici," p. 144.

in love with Teresa, betrothed to Edoardo. Though she loves Ortis she will not break her troth. Ortis leaves, but returns to the Euganean Hills after various wanderings, when she is already married, and commits suicide in despair. The debt to Werther is obvious. Albertazzi gives the genealogy as "Clarissa Harlowe," "Nouvelle Heloïse," "Werther," "Ortis." But the two passions by which Ortis is torn and Foscolo's weak psychology make the story inferior to "Werther." Indeed, as de Sanctis shows, there is really no story. The situation is lyrical, more suited for a poem by Byron or Leopardi than for a novel. We begin with the fifth act of the tragedy when the end is merely a question of time.

Though Foscolo proclaimed himself a classicist, "Ortis" proves that at bottom he was thoroughly romantic in character. The subjective method, the subordination of reason to feeling, the poetical prose and the melancholy view of life are all romantic. The selfish individualism is Byronic. "Every individual is a declared enemy of society, because society is necessarily hostile to the individual. . . I am a world in myself and I am determined to set myself free, because I have not found the happiness promised me." It is only his classical education and the fact that the new ideas reached him through the classics that made Foscolo a classic. Graf declares that had he been born twenty years later he would have been a romantic. "Ortis" is distinctly morbid, and though Foscolo often referred to himself as Ortis in later life, he always regretted

the harm the book might do " by making the path of life seem aimless and gloomy to young people, whom nature intended to enter upon it full of hope." For, unfortunately, it was to the young that its patriotism and passion appealed. There is often a touch of unhealthy melancholy in youth which passes off in later years, and the pessimism, which disgusted elder people, gave " Ortis " an additional charm in the eyes of the younger generation. Pellico's sonnet refers to its evil influence, and such was its effect on Mazzini when a young man that his mother was afraid he would commit suicide.

To this period belong the odes, " A Luigia Pallavicini caduta da cavallo " and " All'amica risanata," the first to show Foscolo's fully developed powers. Foscolo is not a spontaneous lyrist. The events which gave rise to the odes are the merest pretexts. He takes them and transfers them to splendid historical or mythological surroundings. Early associations made the Greek classics peculiarly alive to him, and he is one of the few Italians to draw their inspiration from Greece rather than from Rome, for Greek does not play a prominent part in the educational system of the peninsula. He is not inspired so much by thought or feeling as by the æsthetic possibilities of his subject, which he proceeds to embellish with an astounding wealth of mythology in beautifully chiselled phrases. In these early odes Parini has obviously been his master.

Ortis had cured Foscolo as Werther had cured Goethe. He returned to Milan, where he led a

gay life for the next few years. In 1803 he published his translation of Catullus' " Coma Berenices " with a learned commentary. The elaborate mythology with which he adorns his odes explains his sympathy with Alexandrine poetry and his choice of such a work to edit. Then for two years he was attached to the Italian division in the North of France, where he gained the reputation of being a good officer, kindly towards his men, whom he would even defend before a court-martial. Here he wrote his excellent blank verse letter to Monti and gained the affections of an English lady, by whom he became the father of Floriana, the daughter who nursed him so tenderly in his later years. For Sterne he had a great admiration, and while at Boulogne he began the translation of the " Sentimental Journey—the Viaggio Sentimentale di Yorick," as he called it—which was not completed till 1813. It has made that immortal work almost as well known in Italy as in England.

It was on his return to Milan in 1806 that Foscolo began the " Sepolcri," the greatest of all his poems, which appeared in the following April. Like that of his friend Pindemonte, to whom it is dedicated, it owes its origin to the new laws prohibiting burials within the city walls and providing common cemeteries for all alike outside. Young's influence has dwindled to a mere echo and Foscolo describes the " Sepolcri " as " a kind of poetry which I believed, perhaps wrongly, to have originated with myself." He tells us that he owed his inspiration to the Greeks " who derived their moral and political

ideas from ancient tradition and appealed not to their readers' reasons, but to their imaginations and hearts." Cured of his disillusions, the poet is on firm ground once more. Yet, in spite of their classical setting, the thoughts and ideas are thoroughly romantic. Monuments to the great dead, though of no use to the departed themselves, who are unconscious of them, are helpful to the living by inspiring them with a desire to emulate the achievements of their forefathers.[1] The law is wrong in making no distinction between the graves of the hero and the malefactor, for it is only the latter who would not care whether his grave were honoured or not. It is a disgrace that a great poet like Parini should lie in an unidentified pauper's grave, possibly next to that of a murderer. The ancient worship of the dead encouraged both civil and domestic virtues and the English are right to tend their cemeteries so carefully. The dead live on in the affection of their dear ones, which is kept alive by the tomb. Only those who have no relations are altogether forgotten. Who can fail to be inspired by the tombs of the mighty dead in Santa Croce? And the description of these is the finest passage in the whole poem. Foscolo then carries us to his native Greece, describes the ghosts supposed to fight at Marathon, and the carrying of Achilles' arms to Ajax's tomb by the sea. The poem ends with Cassandra's prophecy that

[1] "A egregie cose il forte animo accendono
l'urne de' forti, o Pindemonte, e bella
e santa fanno al peregrin la terra
che le ricetta."

Homer will one day bring immortality to all the heroes who fought at Troy.

Foscolo only touches lightly on the main incidents in this comparatively short poem of 295 admirable blank verse lines, but he brings them before us in a series of masterly pictures. His method reminds one of Pindar. The success of the poem is due in some measure to the courage and hope it inspires. To Pindemonte the contemplation of the dead suggested nothing but passive resignation, but it roused Foscolo to action. The beauty of the form is even more remarkable. It has been truly said that Foscolo was not strictly a creator. Highly cultivated and a keen observer, he adopts whatever strikes him as useful for his purpose. Luigi Carrer pointed out that there is hardly a line in the poem which is not an echo from one of his predecessors, yet so completely has Foscolo digested his material that the "Sepolcri" is altogether original. In a criticism of Berchet's translation of Gray's "Bard," Foscolo declared that originality "does not consist in absolute invention, but in reproducing in a suitable way what has already been invented with new and varied beauties." And this was certainly his own method. "The dignity of the thought," says Rossi,[1] "the splendour of the images, the style, so wonderfully effective in its lightness and variety," the verse which "accompanies the thought from one end to the other, underlining it, as it were, with musical notes that explain it and comment upon it—everything, even a certain obscurity

[1] "Storia della letter. ital." Vol. III, p. 199.

and inaccuracy in a phrase here and there, helps to produce upon the reader a strong, deep, indelible impression." The purity and restraint of his art at its best, show his natural affinity with the classic poets of Greece.

Foscolo was also a master of the sonnet and some of his, *e.g.*, those to Zacynthus, and on the death of his brother or the excellent portrait of himself, are among the best in the language. About this time he brought out a specimen translation of the first book of the " Iliad," but, in spite of his knowledge of Greek, his version is far inferior to that of Monti. His individuality was too strong for him to be able to reproduce successfully the work of another poet, however great. In 1808 he was made Professor of Eloquence at Pavia, and in the following year he delivered his address on the origin and duties of literature which, though the thought is at times a little vague, is always eloquent and is admirably written. He gave a few more lectures but the professorship was abolished in the same year in all the Italian universities. Foscolo's courage in censuring Virgil, Pindar and Horace for their servility at a time when everyone was flattering Napoleon is characteristic. He transferred his pension to his mother and also undertook to provide for his brother's education. For the next few years he was entangled in an endless series of amours. Then in 1810 Monti quarrelled with him owing to a criticism of Arici's poems which he had not written. It is probable that the cautious trimmer was glad of a pretext for breaking with such a firebrand.

The "Ajace" appeared in 1811 and Foscolo's enemies at once found political allusions in it. Ajax was identified with Moreau, and Calchas with Pius VII, who says to Agamemnon (Napoleon), "Thou art not impious, thou art drunk with pride." Foscolo wrote a letter solemnly disavowing the allusions, largely, it is thought, to exculpate the censors; but it seems strange, in any case, to treat the quarrel about the arms as if it were a struggle against tyranny. He never published the play. In 1812 he retired to Florence and spent a happy year there at the beautiful Bellosguardo Villa, frequenting the Countess of Albany's and other assemblies. Here he began his "Alle Grazie." The first part is dedicated to Venus and describes the divine origin of the Graces, the second to Vesta. "The poet raises an altar to the Graces on the slopes of Bellosguardo, and brings thither as priestesses three ladies, Eleonora Nencini, the Florentine, Cornelia Martinetta of Bologna, and Maddalena Bignani of Milan." The poem was to have been dedicated to Canova, then at work on his group of the Graces, and was to "idealise all the metaphysical ideas of the beautiful." "To the first lady he assigns the graces that breathe from a mind tempered with gentle piety and symbolises them in the effects of music; to the second the graces of the imagination, expressed in the sweetness of her discourse, and to the third the graces that appeal to the eye in a graceful beauty moving in the dance." The third part, to Pallas, in mid-ocean, describes the making of the veil of the Graces. But though

Foscolo worked upon the poem for a year and was continually busy with it for the rest of his life, he failed to discover a means of carrying out the task he had set himself to his satisfaction. The result is a series of fragments, many of which, such as the description of Lake Como or the address to Zacynthus, are exceedingly fine. In 1813 he finished his last play, "Ricciarda," which was not published till 1820 in London. It is full of life and warmth and pathos and contains a strong appeal for peace and unity in the peninsula, which made it popular.

Napoleon was now approaching his fall, and Foscolo, who commanded a battalion under the Government, was in danger of being killed by the mob in the disturbances which followed the murder of the Prime Minister, Prina, in 1814. On the return of the Austrians he entered into negotiations with them for the editing of a paper. Naturally they would have been delighted to secure his services, and arrangements were almost completed. But in 1815 Foscolo found he would be obliged to take an oath of loyalty to the restored government and he refused.[1] "By this action," said Cattaneo, "Ugo Foscolo gave the new Italy a new institution—exile." On March 30th, without either money or passport, he fled to Switzerland, never to see his country again. Here he wrote a violent satire upon his brother men of letters in Italy, the "Hypercalypsis," under the name of Didimo Chierico, and four articles on the slavery of Italy. His brother

[1] For his reasons see the letter to his family, March 31, 1815.

and Quirina Mocenni Magiotti, the one woman who seems to have loved him all her life, helped him generously. But Austrian persecution still pursued him and he decided to cross to England. Silvio Pellico undertook the sale of his library to raise the necessary funds, and it was bought by the "donna gentile," who insisted on his retaining both books and money. He reached London in 1816, where he was welcomed everywhere, rather as an exile from Austrian tyranny than as a distinguished poet.

Here he wrote for the reviews and was well paid for his work, but he soon resumed his reckless extravagance. "Poetry and all that brings glory in not appreciated here," he tells his sister, "unless written by Englishmen, so I deal with dull, prosaic subjects, criticism and literary history in a manner almost pedantic." De Sanctis says that the "Grazie" marks the transition to the critical period. "There is no longer the ideal, but the metaphysics of the ideal." Foscolo's critical work is important. He is the first Italian to carry out Vico's theory, to consider a work of art as a psychological phenomenon and look for its motive in the author's mind and surroundings. His "Discorso sul testo della Divina Commedia," which was published in 1842 by Mazzini, is superficial in content, like most of his work, but it is infinitely superior to anything that had preceded it in insight into the spirit of the poem. It inaugurated a criticism which was "at last worthy of the thought and the name of Dante." His essays

on Petrarch and on the Decameron and some of the others are also excellent in their way. "His style as a prose writer, though unequal, as reflecting the great variety of aspirations or occasions in which his writings originated, is never lacking in vigour and colour, and it often displays great eloquence." His letters, especially those to his mother, are important. He writes absolutely naturally and brings himself before us just as he was, with all his violence, his exaggeration and his warm affections.

Foscolo also told his sister that he was soon obliged, with shame, "to give public lectures, not in a university, which would have been an honour, but in a kind of theatre." Why this should have been degrading it is hard to see. But in 1823 he had to sell all his effects and give private lessons in Italian. He fell desperately in love with one of his pupils, Caroline Russel (Calliroe), daughter of Sir James Russel, and it was long before her common sense made him realise that a broken down poet of forty without means was not a desirable match. He squandered the money entrusted to him for his daughter, Floriana, after her mother's death, on building a villa on the Thames, which he called "Digamma," and indulged in every kind of extravagance. He even had lemons and oranges wired on to the trees so that they might look as if they were growing. He was rescued from the abject poverty to which he was soon reduced by Hudson Gurney, who had always befriended him, and who settled him at Turnham Green. Here he died in 1827 after terrible sufferings, through

which he was affectionately nursed by his daughter. He was buried in Chiswick churchyard, but in 1871 his remains were removed to Italy and placed in Santa Croce with those of the glorious dead of whom he had sung so nobly in his "Sepolcri."

> "Con questi grandi abita eterno: e l'ossa
> fremono amor di patria."

The minor poets abounded at this period, as always, in Italy. We may mention Filippo Pananti, the best of the classicists. He led an adventurous life. Captured by Algerian pirates, he was rescued by the English consul, and his description of this incident was very popular. He wrote numerous epigrams, but is best known for his "Poeta di teatro" (1808), which is an amusing account of his own experiences and misfortunes while holding the position in London, where he spent several years, and where he was also a successful teacher of Italian. The poem, though rather too long, is lively, witty, and full of anecdotes, grave and gay being cleverly blended. Pananti owes something to Passeroni, but is more concentrated and less unwieldy. Cesare Arici, a criticism of whose work was the cause of the quarrel between Monti and Foscolo, achieved some success in descriptive poems such as the "Coltivazione degli ulivi" (1805) and "L'origine delle fonti" (1833), the best of them all. But Foscolo rightly observed that he would never win the fame he desired till he gave some proof of genuine inspiration.

CHAPTER IX

MANZONI AND THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

THOUGH the Revolution had left literary form practically unchanged in Italy, as in France, it had fostered a spirit of independence and a revolt against authority which had only been checked, not crushed, by the Empire. Napoleon's fall enabled the pent-up hatred of the Revolution and of all that it had meant to find full scope, and the effects of this reaction were soon felt in literature. Classicism and Hume's philosophy no longer satisfied men's needs and they began to turn to a different order of things, to the Middle Ages, to the Church, and to all that was most opposed to the ideas from which they sought relief.

The new influence was to come from abroad and to reach Italy, as usual, through France. In spite of Bertòla's efforts, the later German literature was but little known in Italy, and in fact in Europe at this period, and the appearance of Madame de Staël's "De l'Allemagne" marks the beginning of a new epoch. Napoleon, of course, prohibited its publication in France, but this prohibition can only have helped to insure its success when it was printed in England in 1813. The book was eagerly read throughout Europe, and to it we owe the introduction of the words Classic and Romantic, with all that they imply, into Italy. But the author of "Corinne," as was only

fitting, was to have a more direct influence in transplanting Romanticism into the country. In January, 1816, a monthly magazine, the "Biblioteca italiana," made its appearance in Milan, with the approval of the Austrian Government, which meant that it should justify the ways of Austria to Lombardy, and advocate the claims of German literature. During the first year of its existence it was strongly romantic in sympathy—for in its infancy Romanticism, owing to its German origin, was identified with loyalty to Austria—and the first number contained an article by Madame de Staël urging the Italians to study foreign literature and to deliver their own from the pedantry of mere dry-as-dust learning, and the idle search for fine-sounding phrases. She found no lack of champions to support her views, chief among them being Giovanni Berchet (1783-1851), whose "Sul cacciatore feroce e sulla Leonora di Goffredo Augusto Bürger, Lettera semiseria di Grisostomo" was published in Milan at the end of the year.

This "Lettera semiseria" was the profession of faith of the Italian romanticists. Berchet had already made his name by some satires in Parini's manner and by a translation of Gray's "Bard," among other things, into Italian verse. The letter consists of prose translations of the "Wild Huntsman" and of "Leonora"—it is interesting to remember that a translation of the latter was the first work of Scott's ever printed—and a treatise, in the form of a letter, urging the claims of romantic poetry. Schiller, Goethe and Bürger are the masters. With

them Berchet holds that the only true poetry is popular poetry, *i.e.*, poetry that appeals to the masses as well as to the highly educated. Romantic poetry seeks its inspiration in the heart, in nature, in popular beliefs, and aims at interpreting modern thought and feeling and Christian ideals. It is the poetry of the living, as classical poetry is of the dead. The Greeks were romantics because they sang of their own history, not of the Egyptians. So was Milton, for he chose Christianity, not Paganism, as his theme. Poetry is as free as the thought that inspires it, and the form must not be separated from the thought. Inspiration must be drawn from life and then the form adapted to it. Nature and reason are the only canons for what is correct. There must be no arbitrary rules such as Aristotle's three unities, and conventional classical mythology must be banished from poetry for ever. Poetry, moreover, has a moral purpose. It aims at improving men's minds, civilising them and satisfying the needs of the heart and the imagination.

These were practically the aims of the best of the Italian romanticists, and Berchet held that they could only be attained by a study of German poetry. Not that this was to be slavishly imitated, for some of the characteristics of German poetry—its sentimentality, for instance—would be wholly out of place in Italy, though admirably adapted to Germany. But new models were needed and they were to be sought in Germany. It must be admitted, however, that in Italy, Romanticism always remained an exotic. As Flamini says, it was "a return of

art to the religious, heroic and chivalrous ideals of the Middle Ages, spontaneous and national in character among the Germanic peoples, but artificial and foreign to us sons of Rome." Yet the clear realisation of the inseparability of matter and form in any work of art and the consequent absurdity of arbitrary rules affecting only the latter was a great gain, for which Italian literature has to thank Berchet and the romanticists.

In 1817 the "Biblioteca italiana" changed its policy and deserted Romanticism. Silvio Pellico and others were eager to start another paper for the spreading of the new gospel. Count Luigi Porro, whose house became the meeting-place of the friends, and Count Federico Confalonieri, one of the martyrs of 1821, provided the funds and the "Conciliatore" came into being in September, 1818. It was to appear twice a week, and among the contributors were the Marchese Ermes Visconti, Giovanni Torti (1774-1852), the author of four "Sermoni sulla poesia" (1818) in Parini's manner which have been called the Poetics of Romanticism in Italy, Berchet, and in fact all the young liberals in Milan. The prospectus, drawn up by Pellico, declared that the "Conciliatore" was so called because it was to "conciliate all sincere lovers of truth." Pellico was the most prominent among the editors, for he had already won considerable fame by his "Francesca da Rimini," which we shall discuss elsewhere. Verri's "Caffè" was their model, and like Verri they made war on the Cruscans and the purists in language and on mere learning

unilluminated by ideas. They strove to popularise science, political economy and new agricultural inventions, but above all to promote the doctrines of Romanticism, especially in articles dealing with foreign literature. Opposition to Austria was another cardinal point in their faith, and they could air their views on foreign rule in an article on the English conquest of India, for instance, which a stupid censor passed. So clever were they that at last the Austrian Governor himself undertook the censorship of the paper. Articles were then ruthlessly mutilated, the "Conciliatere" often having to appear with large blank spaces. The editors, especially Silvio Pellico, were threatened, and at last in October, 1819, they were obliged to abandon the enterprise as hopeless.

The controversy continued to rage furiously nevertheless. A paper, the "Accattabrighe, ossia Classico-romanticomachia," was even published for a year by the Austrian Commissioner of Police in opposition to Romanticism. Carlo Porta, the greatest of the Milanese dialect poets, supported the movement in his delightful "Il Romanticismo," a poem in dialect, while Monti was the champion of Classicism and bewailed the passing of the old order of things in an admirable sermone "Sulla Mitologia" (1825). It opens with an apostrophe to the reckless school of the North[1] that dooms all the gods to death. Even the Graces must fly before these new ghosts and witches, while the sapphire of the Italian sky is changed into mist

[1] "Audace scuola boreal."

and gloom. Truth is the new watchword; but, asks the poet with considerable pertinence, is the spectre on its black charger and the rest of the weird imagery of Leonora any more true to nature than the old mythology?

The foremost among the supporters of the new doctrines was, however, Alessandro Manzoni, the most representative and most influential Italian man of letters of the century.[1] He was born in Milan on March 7th, 1785. His father belonged to an old patrician family, while his mother was the daughter of no less a person than Beccaria, so that he could claim considerable literary inheritance. His early years were spent in Milan and in the neighbourhood of Lake Como, which he was afterwards to make famous. He was educated at priestly colleges in Merate and Lugano, and finally at the Barnabite "Collegio dei Nobili" in Milan. He early showed a strong taste for the Latin and Italian classics. His parents' married life was not happy, and ended in a legal separation of his mother from her husband, who was many years older than herself. Manzoni adored his mother, and on the death of her lover, Carlo Imbonati, who left her his entire fortune, he accompanied her to Paris in 1805. Here they became intimate with Madame Cabanis, and above all with Madame de Condorcet, whose gatherings they

[1] A. Graf, "Foscolo, Manzoni, Leopardi"; F. de Sanctis, in "Scritti vari, ined: o rari," and his two essays in the Diamante ed. of the "Promessi Sposi"; A. Piumati, "La vite e le opere di A. Manzoni"; Albertazzi, "Il Romanzo," II, 4.

frequented at the famous Maisonette, near Meulan, where the circle included all that remained of the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century. Here it was that the young Italian formed a lasting friendship with Claude Fauriel, the learned critic of Italian literature in the Middle Ages, who was a warm supporter of Madame de Staël and wished to see French literature reformed in accordance with her views. Fauriel always had considerable influence over Manzoni, whose adherence to the romantic school may be due in some measure to his friend. It is not surprising to hear that in this society Manzoni soon lost any little religious faith he had brought with him from home.

Shy, retiring and subject to frequent fits of dizziness, Manzoni had no taste for the amusements common to the young men of his class in Milan at that time and he early devoted himself to literature. At first Parini, with whose unflinching moral rectitude he thoroughly sympathised, was his master, and he was considerably influenced by Monti, for whom he preserved a warm affection even after their ways had parted. Monti's "Bassvilliana" was the model for his first poem, the "Trionfo della libertà," written after the Peace of Luneville and celebrating the triumph of the Cisalpine Republic over tyranny and superstition. This youthful production is elaborately mythological and full of fierce invective. It ends with a panegyric on Monti, to whom also the "Adda," a classical idyll in blank verse, was dedicated. Then came three "Sermoni" in Parini's manner, still wholly imitative (1803-4).

Apparently it was his visit to Paris that called forth Manzoni's real powers, for it is in the lines on the death of Carlo Imbonati (1806) that he gives the first signs of what was afterwards to come. They were dedicated to his mother and written largely to defend her against the scandal that had gathered round her name. They represent Imbonati as a man of noble character and upright life who remained true to the principles of the Ode on Education which Parini had dedicated to him. The blank verse is really good. As the poem proceeds Manzoni prays that if he fails he may at least be said to have failed in a way that was all his own ;[1] and then follows the first passage that has the true Manzoni ring, setting forth the poet's high ideals, his honesty, purity and independence in a thoroughly worthy manner. There is no mythology, for the poet is writing in all sincerity from his heart. The lines on Imbonati attracted considerable attention and Ugo Foscolo quoted some of them in the notes to his " Sepolcri," describing their author as " a young man of ability, with a genuine gift for literature, and an ardent patriot," and declaring that he was glad of the opportunity of showing how little his absent friend had forgotten him. . In later life, possibly on moral grounds, we find Manzoni rejecting this poem. In the following year he once more returned to the classical, allegorical style in "Urania"; but it was for the last time, and he then vowed that, though he might write worse, he would never write in this old manner

[1] " Sull' orma propria ei giace."

again, "as it was altogether without interest," and he kept his word.

For the next few years Manzoni was silent, but they were nevertheless important years for his development, marking the turning-point in his life and career. In 1808 he married Henriette Blondel, daughter of a rich Protestant banker of Geneva, who was then sixteen years old. The marriage was celebrated in a Protestant church in Milan, as the priests refused to recognise it. The young couple returned to Paris, and in 1810 Henriette was converted to Catholicism. The arguments of his wife and of the priest who had converted her apparently unsettled Manzoni. According to the generally accepted account, he one day went into the church of Saint Roch and there prayed God to reveal Himself to him, if He existed. He left the Church a confirmed, though not a bigoted Catholic, and remained so for the rest of his days. Shortly afterwards he returned to Milan which henceforward became his home; and here, or at his country estate of Brusuglio, only a few miles outside the town, he spent nearly the whole of the rest of his long life.

On returning home full of new faith and with a firm conviction that poetry should come from the heart itself and give sincere expression to the poet's own feelings, he formed the plan of writing a series of twelve hymns to celebrate the principal festivals of the Church. Manzoni proposed to "group once more round religion the great, noble human feelings to which it naturally gives rise."

Only five of them were ever completed—" Risurrezione," " Il nome di Maria," " Natale," " La Passione " (1812-15); and " La Pentecoste " (1817-22), the finest of them all. The " Nome di Maria " is in Sapphics, the others in stanzas of seven, eight or ten syllable verse, modelled largely on the Mediæval hymns. All the poems are practically constructed on the same lines. They open with a description of the festival, after which comes an invocation followed by the poet's own reflections.

The hymns are superior to anything of the kind that had yet appeared in Italy, but it must be confessed that they do not overcome the defects which Johnson rightly considered to be inherent in all devotional poetry. These are especially noticeable in the first part of the hymns, when Manzoni's real enthusiasm and genuine belief fail to reconcile us altogether to the Biblical imagery with which modern poetry, or at least modern Italian poetry, has to a great extent lost touch. Even the moving picture of the women weeping before the sepulchre and the fine description of the Prophets in the " Risurrezione," or the gentle tenderness of the opening of " Il nome di Maria," suffer a little in this way. Whether because Manzoni had progressed in his art when he came to write it, or because the picture of the early Church did not present the same difficulties, " Pentecoste " is by far the best of the hymns, and the inspiration seems to be carried through without a break. Not till he reaches the moral application is Manzoni seen at his best in these compositions ; and then the simple, severe language,

the culture and the restrained enthusiasm cannot fail to impress. It is obviously the practical side of Christianity that appeals to him and inspires the tenderness of the "Nome di Maria," or the description of a universal brotherhood in suffering, guilt and pardon that closes the "Passione," or the prayer that the spirit of love may descend on all sorts and conditions of men at the end of the "Pentecoste." There is no fanaticism or hardness in Manzoni's religion. A convinced Catholic himself, he is tolerant of others; and the simplicity and directness of the style of the odes, for which Manzoni was probably more indebted to Parini than to any of his predecessors, marks a distinct advance on anything that had yet appeared.

Political events were now of absorbing interest and Manzoni, though his health and his diffidence prevented him from taking an active part in public affairs, was as true a patriot as any man in the country. In 1814 he signed the protest against the action of the Senate of the Kingdom of Italy, which had asked for Eugène Beauharnais as their king instead of appealing to the electors, and he expressed his hope in a canzone that Italy would remain free and independent. He celebrated Murat's desperate attempt of the following year in an unfinished poem, "Il proclama di Rimini," which contains the famous line, "Liberi non sarem, se non siam uni."[1] Manzoni himself considered the line poor,

[1] "Liberi non sarem, se non siam uni:
Ai men forti di noi, gregge dispetto
Finchè non sorgi un nom che non ci raduni."

but its pointed terseness compensates for all other defects. Then the Treaty of Paris brought the country under the yoke of its old masters, and it is interesting to note that the loss of political independence practically coincides with the revolt against the classic rules and the struggle for literary independence, which characterises the romantic movement. Thus the movement has a double significance, and Manzoni, as a good liberal, ranged himself under the standard of Romanticism. The fact that England, Germany and Spain, the countries which made the stoutest resistance to France, were the homes of romantic poetry cannot have failed to be an additional point in its favour in the eyes of its supporters in Italy. With Manzoni's attitude to the romantic movement we shall deal in its proper place. Here we shall only refer to the "Ira d'Apollo," a "jeu d'esprit" which he contributed to the controversy in 1818, though it was not published till 1820, after Monti's death. The god threatens to destroy Milan for its revolt from classical mythology, but at last consents to turn his wrath upon the poet, who alone is guilty, and banishes him for ever from Castalia and all the privileges of the bards of old. Never shall he mount the wingèd horse, but wander through the realms of reality, trudging the world on foot. The poem is interesting as containing the first signs of that keen sense of humour which Manzoni was afterwards to display to such effect.

The Piedmontese revolution of March, 1821, raised high hopes in Milan, and it was generally

expected that troops would cross the border to try to rouse the country against the Austrians. The attempt failed, but in the first enthusiasm caused by the news, Manzoni composed his " Marzo, 1821," a fervently patriotic ode, one of the finest in the language, warmly upholding his country's right to independence. He did not dare even to write it down during the Austrian rule, and was obliged to carry it in his head till the revolution of 1848, when it was published with a dedication to Körner, the German national poet. " Never again shall these waters [of the Ticino] run between foreign banks, never shall barriers rise between Italy and Italy, never again. . . He who can separate the waves of the twin Dora, of the Bormida wedded to the Tanaro, of the Ticino and the wood-clad Orba united in the Po ; who can turn aside the mingled streams of the swift Mella and of the Oglio, or take from it the thousand torrents shed from the jaws of the Adda—he will be able to divide a risen nation into despised peoples, and drive it back to its ancient misery against the course of the years and the fates : a nation that shall be one, enslaved or free, between the Alps and the sea ; one in its arms, its speech, its tongue, its altars, its memories, its blood and its heart."[1] Then he appeals to Austria

[1] " Non fia che quest'onda
Scorra più tra due rive straniere,
Non fia loco ove sorgan barriere
Tra l'Italia e l'Italia, mai più ! . . .
Chi potrà della gemina Dora,
Della Bormida al Tanaro sposa,
Del Ticino e dell'Orba selvosa
Scerner l'onde confuse nel Pol ;

to fulfil the promises of freedom she had made to Italy during the days of Napoleon. "If the land where you groaned oppressed covers the bodies of your oppressors; if the faces of foreign masters seemed hateful to you in those days; who told you that the peoples of Italy would mourn for ever in vain? Who told you that the God who heard you would be deaf to our lamentations?"

Napoleon died in the same year. The news of his death reached Manzoni as he sat in his garden at Brusuglio on the 18th May, "and gave me a shock," he told Cantù, "as if one of its primal elements had been taken from the earth; I was seized with a burning desire to write of it that compelled me to scribble down the ode, the only one, I may say, which I ever improvised in less than three days." The "Cinque Maggio" is unquestionably the greatest ode on Napoleon's death, as Goethe, who translated it into German himself, declared. Lamartine wrote after Manzoni and obviously with the intention of rivalling him, but Manzoni has voiced, once and for all, the feelings of his generation on the death of the

Chi stornargli del rapido Mella
E dell'Oglio le miste correnti,
Chi ritogliergli i mille torrenti
Che la foce dell'Adda versò,
Quello ancora una gente risorta
Potrà scindere in volghi spregiati,
E a ritroso degli anni e dei fati,
Risosospingerla ai prischi dolor;
Una gente che libera tutta,
O fia serva tra l'Alpe ed il mare;
Una d'arme, di lingua, d'altare,
Di memorie, di sangue e di cor."

great conqueror. The rush of Lamartine's ode may be grander, but the absence of any straining for effect and the spontaneity of Manzoni's stanzas give the "Cinque Maggio" the advantage. The lines that sketch Napoleon's career are masterly in the skill with which the incidents are chosen and contrasted, while the poet's deep religious conviction, which sees him as something that had come from God and would return to God again, greatly heightens the effect. "Was this true glory? Future ages must solve the hard question; we bow our heads before the Most High Creator, whose will it was to give him a fuller measure of His creative spirit than other men."[1] Knowing that the poem would be prohibited, Manzoni sent two copies to the censor in the hope that one would be abstracted by an official. This actually happened, and the "Cinque Maggio" was soon circulating throughout Italy, and even Europe, in manuscript, and finally won its author the fame and general recognition which his Hymns had failed to secure him.

Manzoni's odes, as a rule, lack the spontaneity of the true lyric. They were obviously pieced together slowly and laboriously, with the result that the stanzas are often ill-connected, and the language is somewhat obscure and too condensed. But this is not the case with the "Cinque Maggio." The

[1] "Fu vera gloria? Ai posteri
L'ardua sentenza: nui
Chiniam la fronte al Massimo
Fattor, che volle in lui
Del creator suo spirito
Più vasta orma stampar."

inspiration is continuous throughout, thanks to the rapidity with which it was composed, and amply compensates for an occasional hasty expression which is open to criticism, such as "disonor del Golgota" for the cross.

Tragedy now began to attract Manzoni's attention. He was a great admirer of Shakespeare, placing him above all other poets and declaring that he shows us human nature and human life just as they are, as well as of Goethe and Schiller; and as an adherent of the romantic school he set no value upon the unities of time and place. His strong historical sense made him approach his subject in quite a different way from his predecessors. Alfieri took a great historical character, formed his own view of it, and adopted the story accordingly. Manzoni, on the other hand, starts with the historical facts and bases all his conclusions on a careful study of them, endeavouring to present to us both the facts and the characters in accordance with the spirit of their times. Nothing would induce him to alter the facts of history. Both "Carmagnola" and "Adelchi" were accompanied by elaborate historical notes, while the "Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia," to which the latter gave rise, is an important contribution to a difficult question, and brings forward considerable evidence to prove that the Lombards and Italians never became one people, but lived side by side as conquerors and conquered. "Carmagnola" (1816-1820) is the story of the famous condottiere who commanded the Venetian forces against

the Visconti and was put to death for treason by the Grand Council. Manzoni considers him innocent, but recent research tends to justify his judges. "Adelchi" (1820-2) is the son of Desiderius, the Lombard king, and the tragedy deals with the expulsion of the Lombards from Papal territory by Charlemagne.

It must be confessed that the plays are not successful as wholes, though "Adelchi" marks a considerable advance. At best they are only closet dramas. They were only staged once, in Florence, where they met with a qualified success at the hands of a cultivated audience. So great is Manzoni's desire for accuracy that in "Carmagnola" he carefully separates the real from the fictitious characters. In "Adelchi" he abandoned this distinction, but he failed to harmonise the ideal with the real in the latter almost as much as in the former tragedy. They stand side by side, unreconciled. In both plays it is the ideal characters which are most interesting and alive. Manzoni's regard for historical truth prevented him from adapting the real people to the exigencies of the play. But the Venetian Senator, Marco, torn between his duty towards his country and his belief in Carmagnola's innocence, or Adelchi and his sister Ermengarda, noble characters overwhelmed by circumstances, really interest us because we feel that Manzoni has breathed some of himself into them. The plays are not dramatic; they are a series of detached scenes, some of which are excellent, and the absence of the love element

lessens their hold on our interest. True to the doctrines of the Italian romanticists, Manzoni does not go outside Italy for his subject; but the wars between the Lombards and the Franks or between Venice and Milan are too distant to rouse our enthusiasm in a play from which passion is rigidly excluded, and Manzoni's devotion to the historic aspect of things prevented him from sacrificing fact and giving full play to the human and psychological side of his characters.

Manzoni had stated his views on the unities in the preface to "Carmagnola." Foscolo, in the "Foreign Quarterly Review" in London, attacked a play the action of which lasted seven years and transported the reader from the hall of the Council of Ten to Carmagnola's tent, from the Duke of Milan's camp to the Piazzetta, and the "Biblioteca italiana" treated it as badly. Manzoni replied in a letter to Chauvet, one of his French critics (1823), which contains a careful statement of his attitude towards the three unities. In spite of these changes, the two plays really differ very little in structure from a regular classical play by Alfieri, as we see if we compare them with a genuine romantic play like "Hernani." Manzoni could not bring himself definitely to abandon the old traditions.

The plays have many good points. The style is manly, simple, noble, clear and pregnant with thought, while some of the scenes are admirable: in "Carmagnola," for instance, the interview between Marco and the member of the Council, or the description of the journey over the Alps,

and the death of Ermengarda in "Adelchi." In the latter play especially, Manzoni shows poetic gifts of a very high order. But most people will agree that the best things in them are the choruses which Manzoni intended should express his own views on the action of the drama. The chorus in "Carmagnola" before the battle of Maclodio, protesting against the civil wars that were ruining Italy, and the second one in "Adelchi," urging his countrymen not to look to the foreigner for their liberty, are well worthy to stand by the "Marzo, 1821," while the ode that accompanies Ermengarda's death, in which the poet prays for eternal peace on her troubled soul, is as fine a religious lyric as "La Pentecoste" itself.

Manzoni's poetical activity was now rapidly drawing to a close. He sketched out the plan of another tragedy, "Spartaco," and composed a few fragments for the series of hymns as originally projected, but never completed them. With the exception of a few occasional poems he henceforth abandoned verse for prose. As he wrote to Luisa Colet in 1860, "I saw that it was no longer Poetry that came in pursuit of me, but I that went in pursuit of her." His strong historical bent and the growth of his conviction of the paramount importance of truth and accuracy over all else, doubtless helped to augment his distaste for poetry as unsuitable for his purpose. In 1819 appeared his "Morale Cattolica," in reply to Sismondi's strictures on Catholic morality in Chapter 127 of his "History of the Italian Republics." Like

more than one of his prose works, it remained uncompleted. The second half is fragmentary, but the book amply answered the author's purpose and is thoroughly effective as it stands. It is simple, direct and courteous throughout and shows a wide knowledge of the subject, while the sincerity of the author's convictions is obvious from the first.

April 24th, 1821, however, was the date when Manzoni began his greatest work. Goethe one day asked Cousin what Manzoni was doing, and was answered that he " was writing a novel which was to be more accurate historically than any of Scott's, and in which the historical method was to be strictly applied." Manzoni realised that he had failed in the task he had set himself in his tragedies, and hoped that he would find a more suitable means for accomplishing his purpose in this historical novel, which was finished in its original form in September, 1823 ; but it was not till July, 1824, that " Gli sposi promessi " was passed by the censor. The alterations in the new version, many of them made at the suggestion of his friend Ermes Visconti, were considerable. In the first draft Gertrude's misdeeds are narrated at length and the Conte di Sagrato was very different from l'Innominato who afterwards took his place. Moreover, the moral and historical digressions were greatly shortened in the later version to prevent their interfering with the progress of the story. It was not till 1827 that the book was published in its final form in three volumes as " I Promessi Sposi."

Nothing could be more simple than the plot of

this famous novel, the action of which takes place in the neighbourhood of Lecco on Lake Como in the days of the Spanish occupation between 1628-1630. A priest, Don Abbondio, is forbidden, under threats of the direst penalties, to celebrate the marriage of two peasants of the district, Lorenzo and Lucia, by Don Rodrigo, a local magnate, who has made a bet with a cousin from Milan that he will get possession of Lucia by a certain date, and the hero and heroine are obliged to seek safety in flight. Round this slight story Manzoni has succeeded in gathering a series of incidents and adventures which give him an opportunity for reconstructing a masterly picture of the life of the period and for introducing a whole gallery of characters which have taken their place in the everyday life of Italy. Lucia and her mother and Renzo are thoroughly typical Lombard peasants of all time, while Don Rodrigo and his cousin and Gertrude, the Nun of Monza, a historical personage, who had been forced to take the veil without the least vocation and whose life ends in tragedy, the lawyer Azzeccagarbugli, even the various innkeepers and *bravi* are distinct individuals, admirably drawn.

Manzoni declared that trust in Providence was the essence (sugo) of the story, and the religious element stands out prominently. The book may be regarded as a struggle between right and might, in which God is on the side of the former. Manzoni had a firm faith in Christian resignation to the Divine will, but with him this did not mean a mere tame submission to misfortune. A man must do

what he can for himself, and it is his duty to fight to the best of his ability in a righteous cause. Some critics have regarded the religious tone of the novel as a blemish. But for Manzoni no other point of view was possible. His religion is purely evangelical and practical, not in the least dogmatic, and that he was no Sanfedist is shown by his account of Gertrude and by his acceptance of the citizenship of Rome in 1872. As d'Ancona and Bacci put it, Manzoni's religion is the religion glorified in the Hymns, and defended in the "Morale Cattolica," while its moral effects are shown in their practical working in the "Promessi Sposi."

It is not surprising to find, that the most striking characters in the book are those who are most directly influenced by religion; l'Innominato, for instance, a notorious outlaw baron against whom the civil authorities are powerless, but who is converted by Lucia's appeals. Some writers have thought the conversion improbable, but Graf[1] has successfully vindicated Manzoni, whose own conversion was almost as sudden. Two priests embody his ideals of Christianity, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, the saint who does his duty because he cannot do otherwise, and Padre Cristoforo, the manly friar who is expiating a murder committed in his youth by a life of good works and who dies of the plague while tending the sick in Milan.

And it is thanks to a priest that Manzoni takes

[1] "Foscolo, Manzoni, Leopardi," p. 115.

rank among the great creators, for Don Abbondio certainly holds a place among the world's characters. Humour, with its mixture of tears and laughter, is not an Italian characteristic. "English humour is peculiar to the English and in them original," says Tommaseo. . . "Our humorous writers and our humour are poor imitations." Foscolo's translation of the "Sentimental Journey" and Scott's popularity introduced it into Italy; and Manzoni is undoubtedly Italy's greatest humorist. In the plays he had refused to mingle grave and gay, as Shakespeare had done, but in the "Promessi Sposi" his humour finds full scope. It gives point to the delightful asides which the author is so fond of introducing, and helps to keep the idealism within bounds, while it makes him "inclined to fasten upon the amusing side, the weak points in every occurrence and in every character." But it was in Don Abbondio that Manzoni found his opportunity. The priest is an arrant coward—"a man cannot give himself courage," [1] as he puts it—and all his actions are dictated by his fears and his desire for a quiet life. His reflections as he rides up to the castle of the "Innominato" are inimitable, but he is seen at his best in the interview with Cardinal Borromeo.[2] "I have always tried to do my duty, no matter how inconvenient, but when it was a question of risking my life. . ." In fact, the saint was as upsetting to Don Abbondio as Don Rodrigo, for neither of them could sympathise with

[1] "Il corraggio uno non se lo può dare."
[2] Chapters 25, 26,

a quiet life. Yet at bottom he is thoroughly good-hearted and everyone loves him. Graf points out that the excellence of the portrait is due to the fact that in Don Abbondio, Manzoni is really satirising his own weaknesses, his shrinking from publicity and active life.

The descriptions of crowds are particularly good, and the account of the bread-riots in Milan could hardly be better. Manzoni had been familiar with the district in which the scene of the story is laid from infancy. Lucia's feelings when forced to abandon her home with her mother and cross the lake at night, may well be a reminiscence of his own when he had been obliged to sell the estate in the district on which he had been brought up. They must certainly have found an echo in the heart of many an Italian exile of the period.

Modern research has only helped to confirm the wonderful accuracy of Manzoni's reproduction of seventeenth-century Milan. Indeed, the predominance of the historical element has generally been considered one of the chief faults in the novel. Even Goethe, who was one of Manzoni's warmest admirers, told Eckermann that the descriptions of the war, the bread-riots and the plague were too long, and should be cut down in a German translation. Others have criticised the comparative colourlessness of the hero and heroine, Renzo and Lucia; but this is due in no small degree to Manzoni's objection to describing love scenes. In the original draft these were much more detailed, but they were afterwards altered owing to the author's

conviction that it was wrong "to write of love in such a way as to incline the reader's mind to that passion." Hence the air of purity that seems to surround Lucia. He once asked whether he had not over-idealised her, and few modern readers would answer the question in the negative.

But when all is said, the "Promessi Sposi" is the one great Italian novel. "In this novel," Goethe told Eckermann, "we first see what Manzoni is. All that is in the man here comes to the front, whereas his plays did not allow him full scope. . . Sentiment he has, but he is entirely without sentimentality."[1] Manzoni was a great admirer of Scott, to whom he owed not a little, though the use he made of what he borrowed proves his originality.[2] Chateaubriand, indeed, declared that Scott was great, but Manzoni was something more; but then Manzoni embodied Chateaubriand's ideals. It is true that, considered as a finished work of art, the novel is better than anything which Scott's hasty methods of workmanship allowed him to accomplish. But Manzoni has none of Scott's breadth and range and wealth of creative power. To take only one instance, the story of Renzo and Lucia cannot be compared with the great love-tragedy of her namesake, Lucy, and the Master of Ravenswood. It is too tame and domestic. "Art may be personified in Beatrice," says Graf. "It cannot be

[1] Goethe had spoken highly of Manzoni's poetical works in an essay—the "Theilname au Goethe," as it is called—published as an introduction to an edition of the poems.

[2] See Maria Dotti, "Delle derivazioni dei Promessi sposi di A. M. dai romanzi di Walter Scott." Pisa, 1900.

personified in Lucia; and Lucia has no right to prevent Sappho from speaking." Besides, Manzoni was at best only a follower in the field of which Scott had been the first to take possession. Outside Italy the "Promessi Sposi" has had no influence, and even with the later romantic novelists in Italy, Scott's influence rivals that of Manzoni.

The book had been long expected and met with instant success, though Manzoni never made a farthing by it, and even lost money by the illustrated editions. The fact that he had chosen the period of Spanish rule in Milan made it popular with the liberals, but many of them were dissatisfied with the resignation which it was thought to preach.

The "Promessi Sposi" has a special importance in Italian literature owing to the admirable style which has made it a classic in the language. Trained on the Latin classics and the great masters of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries and a good French scholar, Manzoni was able to evolve a thoroughly modern Italian style, which in his hands was a perfect instrument for all requirements. His logical mind and hatred of diffuseness made it easy for him to avoid the besetting sin of the eighteenth-century writers. But he was far from satisfied with the first edition of his novel. "When he wrote it he had no clear idea of the modern idiom as spoken in Florence, and he had been obliged to dig his language out of books, often making use of the words and phrases of his own dialect, where the dictionary allowed him, merely giving them a Tuscan turn."[1]

[1] V. Rossi, "Storia della letter. ital.," Vol. III, p. 239.

So to Florence he went to rinse his rags in the Arno, as he put it, with the help of his children's Tuscan governess. The new edition appeared between 1840-2. The story was hardly changed at all, but the language had been carefully corrected, though Manzoni was not led into adopting any of the local affectations of Florentine speech.

The question of the language had great attractions for Manzoni and, in 1831, he even made preparations for an elaborate work which was to support the claims of the language spoken by the cultivated classes in Florence to be the true Italian. This was never completed, but he gave expression to his views in a number of shorter writings,[1] notably the letter " Sulla lingua italiana " (1845) to Giacinto Carena. In this he proves conclusively that the Italian language does not possess sufficient words to name all the ordinary objects of everyday life without having recourse to the dialects. Hence one of these must be given a pre-eminence over the others, and he is " of the contemptible, heretical and pitiable opinion that the Italian language is to be found in Florence, just as the Latin language was in Rome, and the French is in Paris." One of his chief arguments in support of this view is that we should be surprised at a Savant in Turin, who was unable to find suitable Italian words to express things of everyday life, having recourse to any other dialect

[1] See also the Report, " Dell'unità della lingua e dei mezzi di diffonderla," which he wrote as President of the Commission appointed to enquire into the question (19th Feb., 1868) : two letters to Ruggero Bonghi (1868), and the Appendix to the Report (1869).

than the Tuscan to supply the want. Manzoni's views gave rise to considerable controversy, and it was pointed out with some truth that he hardly attached sufficient importance to literary tradition in the formation of a language, and that he had failed to study the history of the linguistic question; but it is now generally admitted that Manzoni's contentions, if not pushed to excess, were in the main correct and that he set an admirable example in the style of the "Promessi Sposi."

Cantù had complained that, in a Lombard story like the "Promessi Sposi," the dialogue should have been Lombard. But Manzoni replied that, though French or English writers, with definite languages of their own, might safely introduce Gascons or Scotchmen talking in dialect, the risk would be too great for an Italian.

With the second edition of the novel appeared the "Storia della colonna infama." Many people had expected another "Promessi Sposi," and were very disappointed on finding that it was only a historical treatise to prove the iniquity of the condemnation of the suspected "Untori" of the Plague in Milan. The fact that a memorial column was erected on the ground where a house belonging to one of these unfortunates, who were supposed to have caused the plague by smearing the walls with poison, had stood, explains the title, and Manzoni had promised his readers to write the work in the "Promessi Sposi." Manzoni hardly makes sufficient allowance for the credulity of the times in his strictures. It is possible that the use made of the

incident by Beccaria in his famous "Dei delitti e delle pene" may have helped to interest his grandson in the period and the subject.

Though Manzoni always realised that the "Promessi Sposi" was his masterpiece, he had no idea of writing a second historical novel, as is clear from his essay, "Del romanzo storico," which was begun as early as 1828, though it was not published till 1845. For him the historical fact was of paramount importance, and he realised that in the "Promessi Sposi" it is the fiction that matters, not the history. He felt that he had failed in the task he had set himself, and that the historical novel was not suited for such a task and he therefore condemned it as a form of art. By combining the real and the fictitious he considered that the writer really deceived the reader, who is quite unable to distinguish between the two and would probably be led into believing the fictitious real. But this is equally true of any novel, which is bound to be composed of the same elements. He had no conception of artistic truth, which is based upon, but is not identical with historical truth. Indeed, the actual is of no artistic importance except as a means of testing artistic truth. Manzoni did not see, as Scott saw, that history must be sacrificed to the exigencies of the story and that the historical novel is an impossible medium for conveying historical truth as he conceived it. Hence we have an interesting case of a great work of art failing to satisfy the critical canons of its author and condemned by him in consequence.

We are now in a position to discuss Manzoni's attitude towards the romantic movement. Though he did not contribute to the "Conciliatore," he thoroughly sympathised with its aims and sent a copy of the "Lettera semiseria" to Fauriel; and indeed Berchet's views were more or less his own. From his letter to the Marchese Cesare d'Azeglio "Sul Romanticismo," written in 1823, but not published till much later, it is obvious that he attached more importance to its negative than to its positive side. The classics, he considered, were to be studied, but not to be slavishly imitated, and ancient mythology was doomed to disappear like Harlequin and Pantaloon, who could boast of support just as whole-hearted as Jupiter and Mars in their own day. But when he comes to treat of the positive side, he has very little to tell us. In fact, like all great artists, he keeps a golden mean between the two schools, and his strong common sense and critical taste prevent him from throwing in his lot with the extremists. As he wrote to Chauvet, the Italian romanticists had taken from Germany, England and France what seemed to them to be suitable and true (adatto e vero) in the new doctrines. Manzoni's reason always dominated his feelings. He had no sympathy with Bürger's "Leonora" or with the "Castle of Otranto," no blind love for the Middle Ages, as his sneer at Knights Errant in the "Promessi Sposi" shows;[1] and he has nothing but contempt for "the mixture of witches and spectres, the systematic confusion, the

[1] In Chapter XXXIII.

straining after the marvellous and the formal renunciation of common sense" which constituted Romanticism for some people. In his opinion the artist should make "utility the end, truth the subject, interest the means"[1] in his work. He was no admirer of Tasso and strongly disapproved of the introduction of the marvellous into his account of the Crusades. It is noticeable that beauty has no place in his formula, and moral truth always came first for him. He would have utterly rejected Keats' theory that beauty is truth, truth beauty.

But Manzoni's wide sympathies enable him to enter into all sorts and conditions of characters. His is the true Christian charity which embraces the sinner as well as the sinned against. Nor had he any of Byron's selfish individualism. His method was thoroughly objective, and he keeps himself as much out of sight as possible. He loves the people, for he was thoroughly democratic, as the fact that he would never use his title of Count shows; but this does not blind him to their faults, any more than his Christianity blinds him to those of his Church.

It is this extraordinary reasonableness and self-restraint, this perfect mental balance and strict regard for truth that justifies Arturo Graf in maintaining that at heart Manzoni was as much a classic as a romantic.[2] These were the characteristics

[1] "L'utile per iscopo il vero per soggetto e l'interessante per mezzo."—"Sul Romanticismo."

[2] "Foscolo, Manzoni, Leopardi," "Il Romanticismo del Manzoni."

which made him object to mythology, as something which had ceased to mean anything in a Christian world. Classical, too, is his appeal for "the strictly necessary: all that is not necessary is a blemish." [1] Hence his prose has sometimes been said to be a little wanting in colour. He took no delight in the picturesque for its own sake, and liked to suggest a scene in a few words rather than to describe it in detail. Nothing could be less "romantic," for instance, than the account of Renzo's night in the woods before escaping to Bergamo. We have the clearest idea of the whole scene and of its effects on Renzo, but nothing more, not a superfluous touch. This passion for exact truth explains not only his unfitness for the rough and tumble of active life, but also the extraordinary slowness with which he composed and the small amount of his actual output. Even his letters were laborious compositions, for he could not bear to commit anything to paper and let it out of his own hands until he was sure that it conveyed his exact meaning and nothing more. In this again he is unlike the romantics, who have, as a rule, a tendency to exaggerate and to concentrate their efforts on purple patches rather than on perfecting a work of art as a whole.

Manzoni led a quiet life in Milan, in the midst of his growing family, surrounded by admiring friends. A number of literary men were of his circle, among them Giovanni Berchet, Giuseppe Giusti, Ermes Visconti and Tommaso Grossi, who

[1] "Il puro necessario; tutto ciò che non è necessario è nocivo."

ultimately lived with him, and Antonio Rosmini, the philosopher of Stresa. His correspondence with Rosmini has been published, and it is largely owing to his friend's influence that Manzoni became interested in philosophy. With the advice and even the assistance of Rosmini, Manzoni projected a number of philosophic dialogues, but only one, the "Dell' Invenzione" (1850), in which he applies the Rosminian doctrine of innate ideas to creative art, was ever published.

Though too old and feeble to take part in the movement himself, Manzoni induced his son Filippo, who was unwell, to join his brothers on the barricades in Milan during the Five Days of 1848, and he signed the petition for help which was sent to Charles Albert. On the return of the Austrians he retired to Lesa, on Lake Maggiore, for two years, and saw much of Rosmini there. He declined to stand as deputy for Arona, on the ground that he was unsuited for the post. The Austrians wisely left him alone, but he never wavered in his views and refused all honours at their hands, even declining a visit from the Grand Duke Maximilian, who came to enquire after him when he was seriously ill. He was always ashamed of being almost the only one among his friends who had not been in prison for the cause. Yet, in de Sanctis' hearing, he called the idea of a United Italy a "bella utopia."[1] But he accepted the office of Senator from Victor Emmanuel in 1860, as well as a pension of £400 when his affairs were somewhat embarrassed. In 1861 he was

[1] "Letter. ital. nel secolo XIX," p. 322.

present at the sitting which proclaimed the Kingdom of Italy, and in the following year he voted for the transference of the capital from Turin to Florence. Rome he never saw, though he accepted the honorary citizenship of the new capital from the Municipality in 1872 in a noble letter, in which he refers to the " unwavering aspirations of a long life for the independence and unity of Italy."

Private sorrows overshadowed his later years. He outlived many of his children, as well as his friends. His first wife died in 1833, his second (whom he had married in 1837), in 1861. Up to the last he was at work on " La rivoluzione francese del 1879 e la rivoluzione italiana del 1857." The first part is practically complete, but the second is a fragment, though we can gather the main line of argument from the Introduction. Manzoni held that reforms could have been perfectly introduced into France without the violent measures of the Revolution, but that Italy was forced to establish a monarchy and overthrow the smaller states, as they had not the dignity necessary to guarantee the security of their subjects, and it was impossible to reform them. Manzoni lived on till the 22nd May, 1873, and was mourned by a whole nation, for it was universally recognised, that, outside his services to Italian literature, he had contributed not a little both by his example and his writings to the moral and political regeneration of his country. The educational importance of his work has been enormous. " He was certainly a great innovator," say d'Ancona and Bacci, " and

in poetry, as in prose, in thought, in feeling, and in methods of representation he marked out a new way for writers and readers alike, so that a return to the obsolete forms of literature which he destroyed is now out of the question. Love of truth, the 'sacred truth,' which he showed to be the source of all that is good in the works of the mind, as in active life, is the lasting principle of the literary reforms which he advocated, as it must be of all future reforms; so Graf is right in his conclusion. Let us return to the art of Manzoni, 'not to remain there, but to find the way we have lost.'"

CHAPTER X

LEOPARDI

COUNT GIACOMO LEOPARDI[1] is unquestionably the greatest Italian poet since Tasso, and the first, since Metastasio, who takes rank as a poet of Europe. Alfieri and Foscolo, Manzoni and Carducci are essentially Italian writers, but Leopardi is universally recognised as the greatest poet of pessimism; and since Gladstone's essay in the "Quarterly" (Vol. 86, p. 295) he has received his full share of attention in England, which is more than can be said of any other poet of modern Italy. He was born on June 29th, 1798, at Recanati, a little town in the Marches, on the slopes of the Apennines overlooking the Adriatic, between Loreto and Macerata. His father, Count Monaldo, was a rigid Catholic of the old school who had supported Papal rule during the Revolutionary period at considerable personal risk, and had written several works upholding his principles. The control of his property, sadly encumbered by his extravagance and bad management, was at last legally transferred to his wife, the Marchesa Adelaide Antici, who now made it her life-work to restore the family

[1] See especially, "Foscolo, Manzoni e Leopardi," by A. Graf, whose own pessimism makes him an admirable interpreter of Leopardi; G. Carducci, "Degli spiriti e delle forme nella poesia di G. Leopardi" (Bologna, 1898); G. Mestica, "Studi Leopardiani" (Firenze, 1901); B. Zumbini, "Studi sul Leopardi" (Firenze, 1902-4). The literature on Leopardi is considerable.

fortunes, a task which it took her thirty-five years to accomplish. To it this terrible woman ruthlessly sacrificed the happiness of her husband and children, over whom her power seems to have been absolute. From the " Pensieri " of her famous son it appears that she was really glad when any of her children died young, since they would go straight to Paradise and cost her nothing to educate ; and she could hardly conceal her joy when this actually happened. Guerrazzi's mother was human by comparison.

Leopardi's boyhood, spent with his brother Carlo and his sister Paolina, of whom he was always fond, can hardly have been happy in such surroundings. Yet at first he was lively, even overbearing, and he always retained a warm affection for his second tutor, Sebastiano Sanchini. At ten years old he began to develop his extraordinary intellectual powers, which soon carried him far beyond his teacher's elementary knowledge, and from 1810 to 1816 he hardly left his father's library, except to fulfil his religious duties. His parents seem to have made no attempt to check this insane way of life, to which, he tells us, he was driven by an overpowering, even insolent desire for fame. He had never been strong, and by his seventeenth year he was already showing signs of the variety of nervous and other maladies which were to torture him for the rest of his short life. " In fact," he wrote to Giordani in his fifty-first letter, " I have ruined my health by seven years of mad, desperate study at the time when my constitution was developing, and should have been gaining

strength." So bent was he that his fellow-townsmen contemptuously called him the Hunchback.

But during these years he had become an accomplished scholar. Unlike our own, the great poets of Italy have almost invariably been men of considerable learning. Whether it is on account of the vast tradition of culture that lies behind them or for some other reason, they seem to draw their inspiration through a profound knowledge of literature rather than from a direct contact with life itself. Dante is as true an embodiment of the poetic characteristics of Italy as Shakespeare rather than Milton is of those of England. Hence possibly the comparative dearth of great Italian dramatists and novelists. Be this as it may, Leopardi was certainly the greatest scholar among the Italian poets since Petrarch, and, says Zumbini,[1] it would be as unfair to consider Leopardi apart from his works of learning as to judge Petrarch by his "Rime" alone. He acquired his extraordinary knowledge of Greek entirely unaided, at a time when it was generally neglected in Italy, and during these years he was better acquainted both with Latin and Greek than with Italian. But it was unfortunate that he had no guide. His father's library was excellent in its way, and, in 1812, he had generously thrown it open "to his children, friends and fellow-townsmen," but its strength did not lie in the best authors. Consequently Giacomo wrote elaborate commentaries on Greek orators of the decadence such as Fronto, and annotated the lives

[1] "Studi sul Leopardi," p. 349.

of some sixty saints and fathers. Moreover, he was quite out of touch with the scholarship of his day. Yet had his notes been published when Niebuhr saw them in Rome, he would undoubtedly have taken high rank among contemporary scholars. In 1830 he was induced to give his manuscripts to De Sinner, a Swiss professor who promised him both fame and fortune from their publication. But De Sinner neglected his trust and only brought out a few extracts, and the enormous strides since made by German scholarship have left Leopardi far behind. The manuscripts were bought by the Tuscan Government in 1858 and are now in the National Library at Florence. At the age of thirteen Leopardi wrote a tragedy of no value, "Pompeo in Egitto." He was the author of a "Storia dell' Astronomia" (1813), and a "Saggio sopra gli errori popolari antichi" (1815), which, though the criticism is weak, show amazing learning, for one of his age.[1]

But Leopardi was to be something more than a scholar. Towards the end of 1815 he "began to reflect seriously upon literature," and underwent a kind of literary conversion. His taste had developed and he awoke to the importance of ideas and of the artistic value of style as compared with words. Giordani's writings in the "Biblioteca italiana" made a great impression upon him. Leopardi wrote to him and the result was a correspondence which was of the utmost value to the young

[1] See "Nuova Antologia," June 1st, 1891, "Il Leopardi Filologo," by G. Satti.

scholar. After so many years of repression he had at last found someone who could appreciate him, and to whom he could write freely. There is something almost lover-like in the way in which Leopardi pours out his thoughts and ideas on every subject to his new friend. These letters, especially the third, the longest he ever wrote, are indispensable for a thorough knowledge of the man. The growing warmth in the tone of the correspondence brings out Leopardi's craving for affection and to Giordani belongs the credit of having been the first to see his real greatness.

Alter his literary conversion Leopardi turned tc translation rather than to editing. To this transition period belong the versions of the Batracomyomachia, the first book of the Odyssey, the second book of the Æneid, and also of the portions of Fronto and Dionysius of Halicarnassus discovered by Mai. In 1816 he composed a translation of an imaginary Greek ode to Neptune, which took in a number of men of learning, and also of two Anacreontic poems supposed to have been found in the same manuscript. This work gradually purified his Italian style. The translations are often slipshod and contain strong traces of the influence of the Cinquecento, or even of the Settecento, in the frequent Gallicisms and affected archaisms. By 1817 he had realised his mistake and condemned his own version of Dionysius. Giordani had recommended him to adopt "the language of the Trecento and a Greek style," and so well had he followed this advice that he actually deceived

Padre Cesari by his "Il martirio dei SS PP del Monte Sinai," which he declared he had found in an ancient manuscript of the period and which was published by Stella in 1826.

But this was not the only conversion which Leopardi experienced at this time. In 1817 his health obliged him to limit his studies to a few hours a day, and his moral and religious views underwent a complete change. Deprived of his books, his only companions hitherto, and utterly incapable of entering into ordinary amusements and occupations, he had only his own thoughts upon which to fall back. It is not surprising that he was oppressed by "an obstinate, black, horrible, cruel melancholy, which feeds upon study and only increases without it." Forced to exist "in this savage native town of mine, amid vile, boorish people," "abandoned, buried, without love, without life," and in wretched health, he gradually developed that pessimism with which his name is inseparably connected.

In 1818 this monotony was broken by the unprecedented event of a visit from Giordani, to which Leopardi had long been looking forward with the keenest impatience, not unmixed with a dread that his friend's feelings might change when they met. Of course the fear was groundless. But meanwhile life at home was becoming more and more impossible. Giordani's visit was so timed as to convince Leopardi's parents that he was the real cause of the lad's changed opinions, and perhaps the visit may have given Leopardi courage to plead

for permission to leave home with more than usual vigour. But his father, or more probably his mother, was inexorable. Not only would the additional expense have interfered with her darling project of retrieving the family fortunes, but there was every probability that, out of his parents' reach, he would become more deeply imbued with the prescribed liberal opinions. Not that, as a liberal and a free-thinker, he was very different from other able young men of the day. But it was a period of transition. The cleavage between the old ideas and the new was complete, and continual friction was produced by the absolute dependence of young men of position in Italy upon their parents. Verri had felt the difficulty, but his energy and the fact that he lived in a centre like Milan enabled him to surmount it. No wonder that in his " Pensieri " Leopardi declares that really great men lose their parents and win their independence early in life. As yet he had not even been informed of the state of the family finances, a knowledge of which might have modified his feelings. So desperate did he grow, that in 1819, when he came of age, he made an attempt to escape from home with his brother Carlo, but failed. After this even his letters were opened and his movements were carefully watched. His health grew worse and a still more severe nervous breakdown made it impossible for him to work.

At last his uncle, Carlo Antici, obtained permission for him to spend the winter of 1822-3 with him in Rome. But Leopardi was bitterly

disappointed. He soon realised that happiness comes from within and not from without, and that "pleasure is a name, not a reality." He could never enjoy the present, and in Rome he even longed for Recanati. "The great things I see do not give me the least pleasure," he wrote to Carlo on November 25th, 1822, "because, though I know that they are wonderful, I do not feel it, and I assure you that their very number and their greatness bored me after the first day." He enjoyed the Corso in Carnival, however, and the ballet delighted him. But he grew more and more convinced that the world is only beautiful at a distance.

Two more years followed in the "living tomb" at Recanati, and then an offer from the bookseller, Stella, inviting Leopardi to Milan to edit an edition of Cicero, once more set him free in July, 1825. The next three years were spent first at Milan, then at Bologna, Florence and Pisa. He was paid eighteen scudi a month, and sometimes made a little extra by giving private lessons. These were busy years, for in addition to the Cicero he published his well-known commentary on Petrarch (1826) and a "Crestomazia della prosa e della poesia italiana," besides translations from Isocrates and Epictetus. At Milan he fell desperately in love with Contessa Teresa Malvezzi, who at first treated him kindly, then cruelly. In Florence he found his old friend Giordani and was introduced, among others, to Gino Capponi and to Manzoni, then busy revising the "Promessi Sposi." Leopardi describes him as "full of kindness and worthy of his

fame." Here Vieusseux made him favourable offers to contribute to the "Antologia" for which most of the ablest men in the country were at that time writing. But these he declined. Like so many other clever young men at this time, he was always in hopes of being given some official post, which were doomed to disappointment. Had he consented to enter the Church, he might have inherited rich benefices. He had already refused a Chair in the University of Parma, as well as Professorships in Berlin and Bonn offered him by Bunsen, on Niebuhr's recommendation, for he dreaded the effects of the Northern climate on his health. The winter of 1827-8 he spent in Pisa, where he grew much stronger, and in November he returned to Recanati with young Vincenzo Gioberti, who remained through life his devoted admirer. But this improvement in health was followed by a terrible relapse, which obliged him to give up all work for Stella, and live on at Recanati, unable to do anything, in the blackest melancholy.

In 1830 Colletta and other Tuscan friends offered him a monthly allowance, nominally as payment for a new edition of his poems, though they insisted on his taking the profits too. So unendurable had Recanati become to Leopardi that he felt compelled to accept what he had hitherto refused out of pride. On this he lived, mostly at Florence, for two years. Then he asked his family for an allowance of twelve scudi a month. This was granted him, probably owing to his father's intercession. How far his letters to his father express his real feelings and not

the conventional politeness expected at this time, it is difficult to say, but they are always dutiful and even affectionate in tone, and we can feel sure that, in spite of the difference in their views, Monaldo was proud of his son. Moreover, Leopardi's fondness for his home always increased with the distance he was away from it. In Florence he again fell desperately in love, and his disappointment and disillusion found expression in "Aspasia."

Poerio had introduced Leopardi to Antonio Ranieri, a Neapolitan exile eight years younger than himself, whose views were in harmony with his own and with whom he henceforth lived in the closest intimacy. "He was of medium height," says Ranieri, "thin and stooping, with a white, if not pallid, complexion, his head large, his brow square and broad, with languid blue eyes, a sharp nose and most delicate features. His voice was modest and rather weak, and he had a smile of ineffable, almost heavenly sweetness." In 1833 the friends went to Naples, hoping that Leopardi's health would improve by the change. Here they lived in a house on the slopes of Capodimonte, and afterwards moved to a villa at the foot of Vesuvius, a few miles outside the town, to escape the cholera. Leopardi was kept alive by the devoted care of Ranieri and of his sister Paolina, and made the acquaintance of several literary men in Naples. But the consumption from which he was suffering was aggravated by dropsy. In 1837 he was taken back to Naples. In his last letter to his father (May 27th, 1837), he begged his family

to pray God that after he had seen them all once more, a swift, easy death might release him from sufferings which could have no other end. He lingered till the 14th June, and then died suddenly without, however, seeing his parents again. Ranieri succeeded in rescuing his body from the common grave in which all persons were indiscriminately buried during the cholera outbreak, and laid it to rest in the little church of S. Vitale at Fuorigrotta. Seven years later he erected a modest monument to his memory with an inscription composed by Giordani. Before the celebrations for the centenary of Leopardi's birth in 1898 it was declared a national monument. Ranieri's "Sette anni di sodalizio," published in 1880, the omissions and indiscretions and even fabrications in which it is difficult to forgive, even after his devotion to Leopardi during the last years of his life, contain much interesting information that we could not otherwise have obtained.

"The lyric may be called the crown, the highest point, the very summit of poetry, which is the summit of human speech," says Leopardi in his "Pensieri." He believed that the lack of eloquence in Italy accounted for the dearth of lyrics of the highest order since Petrarch, though he greatly admired Testi. He himself was essentially a lyric poet, and it was in the lyric that he sought expression from the first. Mestica divides Leopardi's poems into two periods. During the first, which extended to 1824, his pessimism and his mastery of form were gradually developing. Then for

a short time he tried prose for his medium, as he tells Giordani, but in 1826 he once more returned to verse, and from that time till his death his philosophy of despair and his mastery of his art remain at their zenith. Throughout this latter period it is said to be possible to trace an extraordinary subtle imitation of Petrarch. Carducci makes virtually the same division, but he continues the first period till 1826.

Of Leopardi's early efforts he only allowed a fragment, "Spento il diurno raggio," from "L'appressamento della Morte" (1816), to appear in the final edition of his poems. Even this is strongly tainted with the melancholy which was afterwards to mark him for her own. To the end of 1817 or the beginning of 1818, belong the elegies inspired by his youthful love for his married cousin, who spent a few days in his father's house. "Il Primo Amore," the second of these, in *terza rima*, gives proof of a deep, genuine feeling, and Petrarch's influence is obvious. Also to 1818 belong the two patriotic odes, "All' Italia," which contrasts the Italians fighting abroad for France with the Greeks, sung by Simonides, who died gloriously for their country at Thermopylæ, and "Sopra il monumento di Dante," in which the poet laments foreign rule in Italy, bewails the fate of his countrymen who perished in Russia for Napoleon, and contrasts the Italians of his own day with their ancestors. These early odes, as Carducci points out, are unequal in conception and execution, and are often over-rhetorical, but they are extraordinarily

fine and have a manly vigour that is often absent from the later poems.

As Leopardi proceeds, the cloud of pessimism descends upon him with a deeper and deeper gloom. But he was a poet, not a philosopher. Hence his pessimism is not so much a reasoned system as an ardent faith which gradually took complete possession of him. He was no misanthropist. His inclination had always been to love rather than to hate mankind, he tells us, and his misery did not originate in ill-treatment by his fellows. Indeed, he would have been happier had he hated mankind, for violent hatred requires just that strong vitality which Leopardi lacked. He is full of contrasts. As Graf points out, he is an intellectual in that he lives in thought rather than in action, but his sufferings make him a "sensitive." His reason and his imagination are never reconciled. From the Dialogue between Nature and a Soul we gather that he considered happiness, or even pleasure, the one end of life, which is only desirable in so far as it enables us to attain this end. Yet unhappiness is the common lot of mankind, and the higher the man the greater the misery. Hope, imagination and illusions are the only alleviations of the universal suffering. "This world is nothing and all our good consists in our dear illusions," he wrote to Brighetti at the age of twenty-two, when the Ode to Mai on the discovery of Cicero's "De Republica" shows that his pessimism was already fully developed. He lived only in the future or the past; the present was always misery to him. These "dear illusions"

he regards as archetypes of things for which man longs, but which he can never attain, and they suggest, and were possibly suggested by Plato's ideas. The nature of these illusions can be gathered from the well-known passage in "Le Ricordanze," beginning—

> "O speranze, speranze, ameni inganni
> della mia prima età," etc.;

or from the ode "Al Conte Carlo Pepoli," in which the poet calls a thousand times fortunate the man who never loses the beliefs of his youth, but complains that his own have already left him. Virtue, fame, courage may be mere illusions, as his reason told him, but he longed for them hopelessly, desperately none the less and cried out against the cruel reality. At one moment, in obedience to his imagination, he hates reality as the destroyer of all that is worth having in life, at another his reason tells him that reality stands next to beauty in importance.

It is true that Leopardi's pessimism had an objective as well as a subjective side, that it was only developed, not created by his ill-health; but, indignantly as he denied it, his physical weakness was undoubtedly the chief cause of his philosophy of despair. Utterly broken in health on the threshold of manhood, he found himself debarred from most of the pleasures of life, above all from woman's love, for which he felt a passionate longing. "I want love, love, love, fire, enthusiasm, life," he once wrote, "the world does not seem to be made for me." And it was only too true. He had

irretrievably injured "that great part of man which is alone considered by the many, and it is with the many that we have to deal in this world," he told Giordani.

Pessimism pervades the "Passero Solitario," while in "Ad Angelo Mai" (1820) it is combined with despair at the state of Italy. "Bruto Minore" (1821), which Leopardi afterwards said embodied his own beliefs, like "L'Ultimo Canto di Saffo" (1822) seem to suggest suicide as the only remedy. "Not to see the light of day, would, methinks, be best," he declares in his ode on a bas relief on an ancient tomb (1834-5) with which we cannot help contrasting Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn." At first he considered man the author of his misery by destroying the illusions nature had given him; happiness is only possible in a primitive, childlike society. Science and progress, man's own work, have made it impossible in the modern world, as we gather from "Alla Primavera" and "L'Inno a' Patriarchi" (1882). But Leopardi's views gradually changed. Nature is utterly indifferent in the "Risorgimento" (1828), caring nothing for man's good and only concerned with the continuation of the race.[1] As the end drew near he was more and more impressed by man's littleness, and the vanity of all his doings, and by the absolute insignificance of his place in nature. This we see from the "Canto notturno d'un pastore errante dell' Asia" (1829-30), the "Tramonto della Luna" (1835), and above all from "A se stesso"

[1] "Che non del ben sollecita fu, ma dell'esser solo."

(1833) and "La Ginestra" (1836), his last ode, which was inspired by the sight of the slopes of Vesuvius. Here nature is the arch-enemy, caring no more for man than for an ant, "a mother at his birth, a stepmother in her purpose."[1] The dialogues bring out Nature's indifference even more clearly. "Live and be great and unhappy," Nature tells her favourite soul, about to be born. It is not her fault, for she is bound to carry out fate's bidding, which she does not understand herself. Leopardi makes no attempt to solve the riddle of life. "All is mystery" (Arcano è tutto) sums up his metaphysics. When the Icelander asks Nature the use of life, two lions instantly appear and devour him, while Federico Ruysch discovers that the quarter of an hour during which his mummies have been able to talk to him is over by receiving no answer when he asks them how they knew when they were dead.

It must be confessed that Leopardi's pessimism, especially in his letters, often strikes one as the outcry of a weakling, who refuses to face the fact that it is he and not the world which is wrong, against his hard fate; and the average healthy Anglo-Saxon, who declines to see things from any other point of view than his own, will doubtless turn from it in disgust. Yet Leopardi is not unmanly like Werther or Ortis. He does not submit tamely to his fate. His pessimism is no negative doctrine, but a fervent faith which in the "Ginestra," where it finds its highest expression, seeks to rouse man to a united action against the common

[1] "È madre in parto ed in voler matrigna."

enemy, Nature. And Leopardi fully realised the important influence his poems would exercise. "Works of genius have this peculiarity," he says in the "Pensieri," "that, even when they bring the vanity of all things vividly before us, and clearly prove to us and make us realise the inevitable misery of life, even when they give expression to the blackest despair, they nevertheless prove a comfort to a great mind, though it be utterly dejected, disillusioned, paralysed, discouraged, and weary of life . . . by arousing once again its enthusiasm; and although death is their only theme, they restore to such a mind, if but for a moment, the life which it had lost." "A noble nature is that," he declares in the "Ginestra," "which dares to lift its mortal eyes to face the common destiny, and in all frankness, hiding no particle of the truth, confesses the evil which has been brought upon it by fate, and its frail, lowly state—a nature which shows itself great and strong in suffering."[1]

The inspiring power of Leopardi's work was proved in the next generation, when he became the favourite poet of the Risorgimento. His own misery was regarded as symbolical of the forlorn state of Italy, which, as he says, "sits on the ground,

[1] "Nobil natura è quella
ch'a sollevar s'ardisce
gli occhi mortali incontra
al comun fato e che con franca lingua,
nulla di ver detraendo,
confessa il mal che ci fu dato in sorte,
e il basso stato e frale;
quella che grande e forte
mostra se nel soffrir."

neglected and uncomforted, burying her head in her lap, and weeps."[1] His patriotism comes out most strongly in the odes to Italy and to Dante. The Austrian police were fully alive to the dangers of his influence. They prohibited the 1831 edition of the "Canti" as "irreligious and containing anti-social principles," and in 1856 a poor barber in Reggio di Calabria was heavily fined for possessing a copy. De Sanctis tells us how young Neapolitan patriots, going to visit the poet's tomb at Fuorigrotta in 1847, used to repeat under their breath the well-known lines from the "All' Italia," "Does no one fight for thee, not one of thine own defend thee? Arms, bring me arms—alone I will fight, I will fall alone!" The stimulating effect of poems such as "Nelle nozze della sorella Paolina," or "A un vincitore nel pallone," both of 1821, which urge his countrymen to do deeds worthy of their ancestors of old, is obvious.

Ranieri tells us that woman, his country and glory were Leopardi's three passions; and the last, in spite of his belief in the "infinite vanity of all things," he probably placed above all others. He hoped to win from future generations the fame that was denied him in his own day, and he has not hoped in vain. "I prefer misery to insignificance," he wrote to his father when attempting to escape from home, and he tells Giordani that mediocrity fills him with mortal fear. He was determined

[1] "Siede in terra negletta e sconsolata,
nascondendo la faccia
tra le ginocchia, e piange."

to rise and to win lasting greatness by his brains and by his work.

But women had an extraordinary influence over him. "I would ten times rather be talking to a pretty girl," he writes to Carlo from Rome, "than be wandering round the Apollo Belvedere, as I am now doing, or the Capitoline Venus." In woman he worshipped the vision of celestial beauty of which only glimpses could be caught on earth, as he tells us in his "Alla sua donna" (1823). Silvia and Nerina, we learn, were two peasant girls of Recanati who died young, and whom he transfigured and idealised in his "A Silvia" and "Ricordanze" (1828-9). The loss of the illusion of love was, to him, the most terrible of all, because the ideal is the highest and the most unattainable; and it is the loss of this illusion, rather than the cruelty of any particular lady, which inspires "Aspasia." Love and death are brother and sister; Love is the source of all pleasure, Death "a beautiful maiden, fair to look upon, not such as cowards paint her," he declares in "Amore e Morte" (1832). This and "Consalvo" (1833), probably reflect the poet's own experience in love. Consalvo, a dying poet, who is obviously Leopardi himself, begs the woman he has loved in vain for a kiss, and then he virtually dies with a shower of her kisses on his lips.

Leopardi is usually pitted against Manzoni as the champion of classicism.[1] Giordani ranks him altogether with the classicists. His education was

[1] See A. Graf, "Classicismo e romanticismo nel Leopardi," in *op. cit.*

purely classical, and many critics find a Latin manner in his earlier poems, a Greek in his later. His classicism appears in his self-restraint, "in the close union of concept and imagination, form and content." Yet in temperament he was a romantic. Mythology had none of the reality for him that it had for Foscolo, and it plays very little part in his work. Romantic, too, are his pessimism, his melancholy and his individualism, Classical melancholy always arises from a definite cause. It was not due to the vague hopes of a future life and the vague discontent with the present which we owe to Christianity. Of our own poets Leopardi ranks Shakespeare directly after Dante and Homer. He knew Milton, but was apparently unacquainted with Pope, Gray and their school, for all their popularity in Italy. But of the romantic Byron, whose "Giaour" and "Corsair" at least he had read, he spoke with enthusiasm, writing to Puccinotti that he was "one of the few poets worthy of the age and of warm, feeling hearts like yours," and he overrated Ossian.

Nature appeals to the mind of a Northerner, to the senses of a Southerner, but to Leopardi it is a source of thought rather than of enjoyment. He had the romantic consciousness of the unity of himself with Nature. He loved to be alone with her, we gather from the "Vita Solitaria" (1819). He was passionately fond of music, but, though very short-sighted, he always refused to wear glasses. And, as Graf proves,[1] hearing plays, comparatively

[1] "Il Sentimento della natura nel Leopardi," *op. cit.*, p. 367.

speaking, a more important part than sight in his poems, and he is peculiarly fond of epithets expressing sound. His scenery is, as a rule, vague, and is generally interesting rather for the thought to which it gives rise. An occasional descriptive poem, such as "Il sabato del villaggio" (1829), shows no unusual gift for observation. Animals, which he considered happier, because less intelligent, than men, appear comparatively frequently in his odes; but here again there is little trace of intimate knowledge. The picture of the hares playing in the moonlight is taken from Xenophon. The essay in praise of birds, of which he was very fond, is largely literary. The fine description in the "Ginestra," of the neighbourhood of Vesuvius, to which he bids all come "who are in the habit of exalting our condition," and which is certainly more calculated to impress us with the littleness of man, especially during an eruption, than any other district in Italy, is one of the most effective he has produced. Perhaps his love for nature is best seen in the "Risorgimento," written at Pisa in 1828, which is the only one of his poems composed in a tripping six-syllabled Arcadian metre.

Leopardi has the romantic fondness for the moon, whose vague, mystical light has always appealed to lovers and sufferers. She occurs continually in his poems, notably in the song of the wandering shepherd in Asia, one of the most perfect of them all. But it is the moon's beauty which attracts Leopardi. His classical training made it impossible for him to sympathise with the fantastic element

she inspired in the lesser romanticists. If Manzoni, says Carducci,[1] "gradually reduced vague, nebulous Romanticism to classical precision and the most positive reproduction of reality," Leopardi "may be said to have romanticised the purity of Greek feeling." In fact, as with most great writers, it is impossible to say absolutely that Leopardi belonged to either school. He followed his own path which led him now into one, now into other, but he never sacrificed his individuality.

It has often been said of Leopardi that his brain usurped all his energies, and that the other functions of his organism were almost in abeyance. This is literally true, for during the later years of his life hardly a single organ of his body remained unaffected by his various maladies. Such a man could never be anything but lyrical. He was utterly unable to represent action or to portray any other individual than himself, for he was entirely lacking in dramatic power. The only novel he might have written was the story of a soul which he planned, and which he has virtually left us in his poems and letters. The subjects for a great work of art must be felt, not chosen, and Leopardi lived only in his mind. He had not the vitality to give us vivid colours. "His poems suggest a bas-relief rather than a Titian." They are cold, chiselled, marvellously polished. A feeling, a recollection, or an experience suggests the idea; Sappho's love, for instance, or the Great Bear above his father's garden in "Le Ricordanze," or the broom on the slopes of Vesuvius in "La

[1] "Del rinnovamento letterario in Italia."

Ginestra." But "no one could guess the subjects of the Canzoni from the titles," he wrote in the preface of 1824; "indeed, as a rule the poet discusses matters quite different from what the reader would expect after the very first line." He told Melchiorri (March 5th, 1824) that his few poems were all short. "I have invariably been led to write them by an inspiration (or frenzy), in obedience to which I draw out the plan and arrange the divisions of the whole composition in a few minutes. This done, I always wait for another favourable moment, and when it arrives—as a rule, this is some months later—I set myself down to compose, only very slowly, for I find it impossible to finish a poem, however short, in less than two or three weeks." From this statement again it is obvious that Leopardi was dominated by his intellect. Not that he lacked imagination, but he did not possess it in the same degree as Byron or Shelley, for instance, and with him it is almost invariably controlled by reason.

But however we may be repelled by Leopardi's theories of life, as an artist he is irresistible. His taste, his perfect command of the language and wide culture make the odes of his later period as nearly perfect as poetry can be. His blank verse, especially, is generally recognised as the best which Italy has produced. In his early days he preferred the *terza rima*, but he soon developed a metre of his own, a canzone which consists of hendecasyllables and seven-syllabled lines in various combinations. At first they are arranged in balanced stanzas, but as he grows more sure of himself he abandons these

restraints and remains absolutely unfettered, guided only by his unerring ear. The instrument he had thus forged for himself he is able to mould absolutely to his will, and his best odes are written either in this metre or in unrhymed hendecasyllables.

As a satirist Leopardi is less successful. He is too bitter, too deadly in earnest ever to raise a laugh. In his "Palinodia al Marchese Gino Capponi," in blank verse, he ridicules the hopes of social and political progress and reform entertained by enlightened liberals in his day. Better known is the "Paralipomeni della Batracomiomachia" (1834-7), upon which he was engaged at intervals during the years of his acquaintance with Ranieri. Both the Austrians and the Italian liberals are attacked as hindering, the former deliberately, the latter out of stupidity, the national revival, which Leopardi fully realised could only be accomplished through the regeneration of the national character. The poem satirises historical events between 1815 and 1821 and caricatures the state of society and of culture in Leopardi's day. German literature and the romantic novel are ridiculed. The Crabs are the Austrians, the allies of the Frogs (the priests), the Mice being the Italians, especially the Neapolitans. Senzacapo is the Emperor Francis I of Austria, Camminatorto is Metternich, etc. But even with a key the allusions are difficult to follow, and the interminable discussions and digressions are often wearisome. The skit on the balance of power in Canto II, the maintenance of which is declared to be the only reason for the Crabs

helping the Frogs, is amusing and typical, as is also the discussion on the great question whether the new king is to be called king of the Topi (mice), or of Topaia.

"The man who could write nothing but verse would indeed be a poor man of letters," declared Leopardi to Giordani on May 30th, 1817; and though he set himself to produce prose comparatively late in life, he soon proved himself a master of the art. His most important and most characteristic prose work, the "Operette morali," was written almost entirely in 1824, at the beginning of the two years during which his Muse was silent. These are, for the most part, dialogues, or treatises, expounding more fully the pessimistic doctrines of the poems. He told Giordani (May 6th, 1825) that his object was to investigate more profoundly "the misery of man and of things, and to shudder with horror, while speculating upon the terrible misery of the riddle of the universe." In the amusing dialogue between Hercules and Atlas the two heroes fall to playing ball with the earth, so light has it grown, till dread of Jove makes them restore it to its old place on Atlas' shoulders. The "Storia del genere umano" and the "Cantico del gallo silvestre," like the dialogues between Nature and a soul, and Nature and an Icelander, already mentioned, supplement and develop the views as to the misery of man's lot expressed in the odes. "Parini, ovvero della gloria," is an attempt to prove that glory, hard though it is to obtain, is really worthless.

In his youth Leopardi had dreamed of a style and language "which, though classical and antique, should yet appear modern, be as easy to understand, and prove as popular with men of letters as with the people." As we have seen, he wisely followed Giordani's advice of going to the Trecento for language and to the Greeks for style. Even Tommaseo, who was no devoted admirer of Leopardi, wrote to Stella highly praising the style of the "Operette morali," which he described as "one of the most correct and appropriate." His approval seems the more remarkable when we remember the florid prose which was in favour at this period. In fact, Leopardi's style must have appeared bare and meagre to most of his contemporaries. Later critics have generally endorsed this judgment as to its excellence. Some, however, have considered it a little cold and lacking in life for all its polished perfection, and it is too entirely intellectual, too unspontaneous ever to be really popular. But Manzoni is the only stylist of the day who may be considered to have surpassed Leopardi, and it is interesting to remember that the "Promessi Sposi" and the "Operette morali" appeared almost together in 1827.

The "Detti memorabili di Filippo Ottonieri," a series of reflections and opinions, appeared with the "Operette Morali," and "I Pensieri," a collection of the same kind, was published posthumously by Ranieri. As a rule, these are developments of the theories of life contained in Leopardi's other writings, but the "Pensieri" are more interesting

and more important than the "Detti memorabili." The "Zibaldone," a sort of commonplace book arranged on no particular system, which, in addition to Leopardi's own reflections, consists of extracts from his vast reading, descriptions of his feelings, etc., has recently been published. It was obviously never intended for any other eye but the author's, for it was compiled "to preserve everything and collect material for future works from the events of his own life and from his multifarious reading," but it contains much interesting matter.

We must not forget the "Epistolario," since Leopardi's letters are the most valuable document we possess for a knowledge of the man himself. There we see him in all his moods. The prevailing pessimism is even more striking than in his poems and the complaints against his lot are far more bitter. The style has a life and feeling that are often absent from his other prose works, and there are frequent flashes of humour, while the letters to Giordani and to his brother and sister are warmly affectionate. In these letters, too, we can trace the poet's intellectual development and the gradual progress of his ideas. They are usually considered among the best in the language.

CHAPTER XI

POETS, NOVELISTS AND DRAMATISTS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

"GIÀ una buona parte di questa Italia si deve ai poeti," said Garibaldi—"We owe a good part of this Italy of ours to the poets." The energy of all that was best in the peninsula was now directed to the one great purpose of expelling the hated Austrians. At first there had been numerous advocates for the preservation of the independence of the separate states, preferably as republics, which the enthusiasm for the great days of the Lombard League, fostered to some extent by Sismondi, had made dear to the hearts of many ardent patriots. But the failure of the movements of 1820-21 and 1831 had shown that an "Italy in pills," as Giusti called it, was impossible, and that independence could only be won by unity, since the old states were not strong enough to stand alone. The men of letters deliberately set themselves to serve the national cause in every possible way. To borrow Guerrazzi's phrase, as they could not fight battles, they wrote novels. Mazzini's theory that literature was to be "the minister of something greater and more valuable than itself" represents the general feeling. "To make a book is less than nothing," said Giusti, "unless the book made remakes people."[1]

Æsthetically, the literature of this period is not

[1] "Il fare un libro è meno che niente
se il libro fatto non rifà la gente."

of the highest order, for artistic merits were considered to be of secondary importance. But it has an interest of its own. It was playing a part in the rebuilding of a nation. "In moments of sadness," says Morelli,[1] "it comforted [the country] with memories, in moments of despair, it roused it with reproaches; in the hour of battle, it served it with its achievements." Now that the glamour of the "Risorgimento" has faded into the light of common day it is difficult to understand the enthusiasm that much of the work aroused, and the difference in the tone of the older generation of critics, who had themselves played a part in the movement, from that of their successors in our own day is often very marked. But we must not judge this literature too harshly. We must regard it rather as a collection of historical documents and give its authors the credit they deserve for sacrificing their chances of permanent fame to the service of their country.

Manzoni still dominates the period and Romanticism, which had become identified with the national movement, still holds the field. But the pure romanticists were few in number and their work quickly degenerated into a fantastic literature, full of feeble sentimentality and affected mysticism. The mediævalism, the brigands and the tournaments became as meaningless and conventional in the hands of Manzoni's followers as the old classical mythology with the later Arcadians. "Classicism," says de Sanctis, "took several centuries to become

[1] In "Vita italiana nel Risorgimento."

an empty form; Romanticism in Italy lasted barely fifteen years. . . It immediately became a mannerism." These later romanticists were, in fact, false to their master, for, as we have seen, Manzoni had instinctively realised how far the new doctrines could safely be carried in Italy. But there is hardly a writer of the period who did not, to some extent, come under the influence of Romanticism.

The romantic novel[1] rapidly became popular, but the novelists are at best mere "pale shades" of Manzoni, and generally owe at least as much to the author of "Waverley" as to the "Promessi Sposi." Yet, though not very productive artistically, says Albertazzi, they did good by the patriotic, political, social and moral ends they had in view. In fact, these later historical novels are interesting rather as contributions to the national cause, for they kept alive a memory of the past greatness of Italy, than for any intrinsic merits. Giambattista Bazzoni was one of the first to win popularity with his "Falco della Rupe" (1829), "Zagranella, o una pitocca del cinquecento," and others. But Carlo Varese's "Sibilla Odaleta" (1827), and still more his "La fidanzata ligure" (1829), which contains some interesting anticipations of "Hernani," were quite as well known, and there were many others of the same kind, now altogether forgotten.

Of the pure romanticists, Tommaso Grossi[2]

[1] Albertazzi, "Il Romanzo," II, 2 and 4.
[2] De Sanctis, "La letter. ital. nel secolo XIX."

(1790-1853), a faithful follower of Manzoni, is among the most important. Born at Bellano, on Lake Como, he took his degree in law at Pavia in 1810, and then came to Milan. Here he made Carlo Porta, the famous dialect poet, his model, but wisely discarded his friend's nastiness. In the "Prineide" (1815) he satirised the Milanese mob for its folly in killing the minister, Prina, since the restored Austrian government had proved far worse than the old rule. The poem was ascribed to Porta, and on Grossi acknowledging it for his own, he suffered a short imprisonment. He soon abandoned dialect, and in 1816 published "La Fuggitiva," a highly romantic, sentimental tale in *ottava rima*, which won him considerable reputation and was very popular. In 1820 appeared "Ildegonda," the best of his metrical tales. Shortly afterwards Manzoni offered Grossi the use of two rooms in his house, and there he lived till he married, some fifteen years later. He wrote one more romance, "Ulrico e Lida," not published till 1837; but it is a mere repetition of his earlier efforts, for he had only this one vein, which was never very rich. The tales abound in fantastic horrors. The account of Ildegonda's imprisonment in her cell, her visions and her unending ravings, which make up the greater part of the poem, grow tedious at last. The heroines are invariably the chief persons in these romances, and they are all of one pattern, over-idealised Lucias. Perfectly pure and innocent, they suddenly find themselves in the grip of a violent passion. The

result is an internal struggle which ends in death, comforted by religion. In fact, this tender, sentimental, forgiving type of woman, utterly incapable of standing the strain of misfortune, had by this time become part of the regular stock-in-trade of an Italian romantic poet. Grossi's *ottava rima*, modelled on Ariosto, is highly praised, however, and "Ildegonda" has a certain charm.

Between 1821-1826 Grossi attempted a more ambitious task. In "I Lombardi alla prima crociata," a heroic poem in fifteen cantos, of which Manzoni predicted great things in the eleventh chapter of the "Promessi Sposi," he set himself to rival Tasso. It brought the author over a thousand pounds, and gave rise to a considerable controversy, but it is now rightly forgotten, for it was an undertaking far beyond Grossi's powers. The best part of the poem is the story of Giselda's love for Saladin, which is like one of the author's earlier romances, but the fact that this is allowed to throw the Crusade, the main subject of the poem, into the background, proves conclusively that Grossi was no epic poet.

Grossi began the novel, "Marco Visconti," his best-known work, in 1831. It appeared in 1834 with a dedication to Manzoni. The scene, as in the "Promessi Sposi," is laid near Lake Como, and in the neighbourhood of Milan, in 1329, and the descriptions of the district are excellent. The story centres round Marco Visconti's love for Bice del Balzo, who is already married. Marco had previously been in love with her mother, and he

successfully ruins both women's lives. The book was exceedingly popular, for the sentimental Bice, who is closely related to the heroines of Grossi's romances, appealed to the taste of the day. The characters are, as a rule, historical, but Grossi has failed to make them live. The book is rather a series of carefully elaborated incidents than a connected story, and it is altogether uninspired. The author fails to bring the period before us, for all his efforts, and some of the incidents are so modern that we receive a shock on realising that we are supposed to be living in the fourteenth century. De Sanctis, rather severely, calls Grossi a caricature of Manzoni and the whole idea of this novel, as well as the style and the religious atmosphere, are obviously derived from the "Promessi Sposi"; but for several scenes he is indebted to Scott's "Antiquary" and "Monastery," and like Scott he introduces some pretty lyrics, notably the popular "Rondinella, rondinella," which are sung by minstrels. The fisherman and his family are the most realistic people in the book, and are doubtless drawn from life, but the description of their grief at the death of their son is too *voulu* to be effective. The style is easy and readable, but is said to be disfigured by "Lombardisms" and to resemble that of the first edition of the "Promessi Sposi." With all its faults, however, Marco Visconti is among the best of Italian romantic novels. In 1838, disgusted with the repeated attacks made upon him, Grossi definitely abandoned literature for the law; and he was wise, for his vein

was obviously worked out. He remained a prosperous notary till his death in 1853, when Manzoni wrote the inscription for the monument erected to him in Milan.

Here we must mention G. Rosini, whose "Monaca di Monza" was an attempt to work up the well-known incident in the "Promessi Sposi" into a novel. But he had no artistic gift and the result is little more than a dreary compilation of facts. "Angiola Maria" (1839), by Giulio Carcano, whom de Sanctis calls a caricature of Grossi, shows the weak, sentimental heroine carried to her furthest limits; yet it was popular. A much better book was Cesare Cantù's "Margherita Pusterla" (1838), which was written in prison. It deals with a conspiracy in Milan in the fourteenth century, and the author's wide knowledge of history stood him in good stead. This novel has more backbone than most of its kind, and some of the scenes and characters are really good.

Another distinguished disciple of Manzoni was his son-in-law, Massimo Taparelli d'Azeglio (1798-1866).[1] He was a descendent of an ancient family, and in his youth he accompanied his father, a violent reactionary, on a mission to the Pope. On his return to Turin he was given a commission in a crack cavalry regiment and led the usual idle, dissipated life of his class. But he soon grew weary of it and left the service to devote himself to art. From 1820-1826 he led the free artistic

[1] De Sanctis, "Nuovi saggi critici," "Letter. ital. nel secolo XIX."

existence he describes so vividly in his memoirs in Rome and its neighbourhood. Then he settled at Milan for some years, where he married. He had gradually abandoned landscapes for historical subjects, or scenes from Ariosto, in his pictures, and it was while engaged upon a painting of the "Disfida di Barletta," the Challenge of Barletta of 1503, that it occurred to him that a novel would be a better way of putting "a little fire into the Italians" than a picture. This was the origin of "Ettore Fieramosca," which appeared in 1833. De Sanctis calls it the first historical novel in Italy, because it is the first in which history actually plays the leading part. Ettore's love for Ginevra, another degenerate sister of Lucia, her outrage by the Duca di Valentino and her edifying death, are incidents of secondary importance. The object of the book was to rouse patriotic feeling by an account of the challenge sent by Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, the meeting of the ten French champions with the ten Italian champions and the glorious victory of the latter. It is not surprising that, in spite of its inferiority to the "Promessi Sposi," it was the most popular novel of the day in Italy. De Sanctis describes the thrill with which the patriots of his generation read Brancaleone's exclamation, after killing Ginevra's worthless husband, who was fighting for the French—"Viva l'Italia! So perish all renegade traitors!" The novel is not a masterpiece, but it is vigorously written and d'Azeglio has a painter's eye for effective scenes. It is manly and inspiring, and far healthier than the sentimental

"Marco Visconti." Fanfulla, the amusing, reckless, kind-hearted, open soldier, has become proverbial in Italy. According to de Sanctis, who knew him personally, d'Azeglio had acquired something of the Benvenuto Cellini during his wandering life as soldier and artist, and he has reproduced this thoughtless extravagance in Fanfulla, without the solid foundation of perfect sincerity and honesty that made the man what he was in real life.[1] The other characters are typical of the second-rate romantic novel, either absolutely good or absolutely bad. The style is simple and natural, with no attempt at ornament. But the book would, we fear, try the patience of the modern reader.

"Niccolò dei Lapi, o i Palleschi e i Piagnoni," his second novel, dates from 1841, and describes the effects of the famous siege of Florence of 1530 on the Lapi family. It is thoroughly patriotic, but it lacks the life and energy of "Ettore Fieramosca," though it is based on considerable research, and it was not nearly so successful. "La Lega Lombarda," another novel, was never finished, for d'Azeglio saw that the time had then come when he could serve his country better in other ways. In fact, his novels are mere incidents in his life as painter and politician.

D'Azeglio's "Gli ultimi casi di Romagna," which appeared in 1846, caused his expulsion from Tuscany. It is an admirable account of the province under Papal rule, written rather to forward the national cause than to bring out abstract principles, as was

[1] "La letter. ital. nel secolo XIX," p. 333.

also "I lutti di Lombardia" (1848). Indeed, d'Azeglio was one of the most effective political writers of his day, for he was intelligible to all classes. He wrote several other pamphlets of less importance. In 1848 he was badly wounded while serving with the Papal troops under Durando. After Novara he advised Victor Emanuel to sign the Moncalieri proclamation, thus sacrificing himself to the needs of his country. In 1852 he quarrelled with Cavour, whom he had himself introduced into the Ministry, but he afterwards supported him in his Crimean policy. D'Azeglio was ambassador in Paris and London, Royal Commissioner in Romagna and Governor of Milan. After 1860 he retired from public life and spent his leisure in writing his interesting and important memoirs, which do not, unfortunately, extend beyond 1846. It is to these, almost as much as to his novels, that he owes his place in Italian literature, and the personality which they reveal makes it easy to understand why he was, as Gino Capponi puts it,[1] "the most popular man in all Italy."

Grossi and d'Azeglio were only the best among many in the romantic school. Sentimental and fantastic metrical romances like those of Grossi were especially popular. Even Cesare Cantù wrote "Algiso" (1828), a love story of the days of the Lombard League. Bartolommeo Sestini's "Pia de' Tolomei" (1822), which has for its subject the famous story mentioned in the fifth book of the "Purgatorio," was deservedly popular and went

[1] Nuov. Ant., Jan., 1866.

through several editions. There was a small group of poets in Calabria, who devoted themselves to the writing of metrical tales, looking up to Byron as their master, and the wild scenery and still wilder life of their native province were thoroughly in keeping with the stories of brigandage or of vengeance they produced. Ballads and romantic lyrics were also numerous at this time. The best of the ballad writers was undoubtedly the Venetian Luigi Carrer (1801-50), with such poems as "La Vendetta" and "Il cavallo d'Estremadura." In form he is classical, looking to Foscolo for his model, but in content he is thoroughly romantic. The descriptions of nature in "L'inno alla terra" are good, while his sonnets show real feeling. He was a distinguished critic with a wide knowledge of history. His "Anello di sette gemme" contains the lives of famous Venetian women, among them that of Gaspara Stampa, told in imaginary letters, which, though written in the rather sentimental manner of the day, has considerable merit.

Romantic tragedies[1] were almost as numerous as romantic novels during this period, but the only writer who can boast of a stage success, with the exception of Pellico, is Carlo Marenco (1800-1846), with his "Pia dei Tolomei" and "Buondelmonte." Francesco Benedetti is an interesting representative of the transition period, who considered Voltaire's "Zaïre" the most moving of tragedies. His "Telegono," a strange mixture of the stories of Ulysses and Œdipus, was written when he was

[1] Bertana, "La Tragedia," c. 9.

eighteen. In "Deianira" (1811) we have Hercules (Napoleon) divorcing Deianira (Josephine). The "Congiura di Milano" is his best play. "Richard III" makes Shakespeare's hero tame and commonplace, but shows the advance of the romantic movement, and in "Cola di Rienzo" Benedetti even ventures to violate the sacred unities of time and place.

No man in his day did the Austrian Government more harm with his pen than Silvio Pellico (1789-1854),[1] who has been mentioned already (p. 178) as one of the principal editors of the "Conciliatore." "In my youth," he tells us,[2] "I foolishly flattered myself with the hope of being able some day to take a place not far below Alfieri," and the great success of his "Francesca da Rimini" (1812-13), which Foscolo wanted him to burn because it was too romantic, must have led him to think that these hopes would be realised. But this success was due rather to the admirable acting of the leading lady and to the patriotic tone[3] of the tragedy, than to any great intrinsic excellence. "Gismonda da Mendrisio" is generally considered a better play, and it is even more patriotic. Pellico's other tragedies, some of them written in the Spielberg, are of little value. They are all classic in form, but romantic in colouring and feeling, for Pellico is romantic to the core. The style and versification are, as

[1] De Sanctis, "Nuovi Saggi critici"; F. D'Ovidio, Introduction to selections from Pellico, 1898; Bertana, "La Tragedia," c. 9.

[2] "Le mie prigioni," additional chapter 12.

[3] See especially Act I, Scene 5.

a rule, slipshod, but "Francesca" contains some striking romantic lines.[1] It was during this period that he began his twelve "Cantiche" in blank verse, romantic narratives meant to bring before us the life of the Middle Ages, which he afterwards recast.

Pellico's connection with the "Conciliatore" had aroused suspicion, and in 1820 he was arrested with his friend Maroncelli, who had made him a Carbonaro, on returning from a trip in the service of that society. He was imprisoned in Venice, first in the "piombi," the famous dungeons in the roof of the Doge's palace, and then at Murano. In 1822 the friends heard their sentence of death, commuted to fifteen years' imprisonment in the Spielberg, read on the Piazzetta. Never strong, Pellico did not expect to leave his prison alive, but he was released in 1830. The Spielberg changed him from a sceptic into an ardent Catholic. Encouraged by Cesare Balbo and his mother, and in spite of the opposition of many of his friends, he now wrote "Le mie prigioni," a book which has rivalled the "Promessi Sposi" in popularity in Italy. "So that Jesuit Pellico meant to have his revenge, too!" exclaimed the Emperor Francis I on reading it. Yet nothing was further from Pellico's thoughts, for his object is clearly to plead the cause of religion by showing how it had comforted him during his imprisonment. But it is

[1] *e.g.*, "Bella
come un angiol che Dio crea nel più ardente
suo trasporto d'amor," III, 2.

generally admitted that Cesare Balbo did not exaggerate when he said the book struck a greater blow at Austrian power, than the loss of a battle. This simple, unaffected account of Pellico's own sufferings roused the indignation of the whole of Europe, for it bore the stamp of truth upon it. There is no pose, not a trace of the egoism which would have been excusable under the circumstances, not a word of complaint, a sign of prejudice or a hint of indignation; and this studious avoidance of partisan feeling was invaluable in enlisting sympathy for men who were ready to endure so much for their country's freedom. The style, except in a few places, is as pure as it is simple, and Rossi compares it to that of the first edition of the "Promessi Sposi."

Pellico returned to Turin a broken man. For the rest of his days his sleep was disturbed by dreams of his past sufferings. He continued to live with the Barolo family, nominally as secretary. It is hardly fair to take his opinions at this time too seriously. He had become a firm advocate of Christian resignation and considered it wrong to "overthrow the powers that be, and raise the standard of civil war." He condemned the revolutions of 1848, holding that Italy should wait for the hand of Providence to deliver her. Pellico was an advocate of the Temporal Power and was shocked by Gioberti's "Modern Jesuit," though the "Primato" had been dedicated to him. "I doveri degli uomini" (1834), his last work, was popular in its day. His political attitude was a bitter disappointment to the more active

spirits and brought considerable censure upon him, but the services which " Le mie prigioni " rendered his country have earned him the lasting gratitude of later generations.

Tuscany can boast a distinguished novelist in Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi (1804-73)[1] of Leghorn, who was an enthusiastic romanticist, but with no sympathy for Manzoni and his school. Passionate and unruly, he was miserable as a child, and his quarrels with his mother, from whom he seems to have inherited his violent temper, and who habitually ill-treated him, spoilt his youth. He was thus thrown upon his own resources and soon evolved a doctrine of force and an inordinate confidence in his own powers which resulted in boundless, but impracticable, ambitions. Love, self-sacrifice and innocence, which had been exalted by Manzoni, played no part in his theory of life. It was while studying law at Pisa that he first read Byron, and he tells us that nothing, not even Niagara, could have produced in him the effect of " the contemplation of that mighty spirit." Guerrazzi was very successful at the bar. In 1828 appeared the " Battaglia di Benevento," his first novel. It rather shocked Mazzini who, while praising its life and energy, complained of the author's want of faith, and " the despair which turned creation into a desert." The story is wildly passionate and over-coloured. But Guerrazzi pleaded, in an introduction to a revised and more moderate edition, that it was written in the full tide of Byronism

[1] Albertazzi, " Il romanzo," II, 4.

when he was only twenty-one. Its very defects made it a welcome change from the older romantic novels, and the vigour and rich colouring insured its popularity in spite of the long lyrical monologues, the impossibilities and affectations blamed by Tommaseo.

In 1829 Guerrazzi, with Bini and Mazzini, edited the " Indicator Livornese," and was imprisoned for a time owing to an article which caused the suppression of the paper. He was an ardent liberal who wrote with a definite purpose, and it was while in prison for a second time in 1834 that he began his best novel, " L'Assedio di Firenze," describing the famous siege of 1530. This was meant " to rouse his countrymen from the miserable lethargy into which they had fallen," since he could not " fight a battle." It has been truly remarked that the people of Florence is the real hero of the tale. The book lacks organic unity, for the love interest is not welded into the story, but stands apart. The traitor, Malatesta, and his accomplice, the amusing rascal, Cencio, are the most real of the characters. It is worth noticing that the comic characters are very often the best in Italian novels. Masi calls form and content " unique and inimitable " and says that no others could have given expression to the miseries of the country. " In the savage exuberance of its strength," says Carducci,[1] " and in the gladiatorial attitudes of the style and in the volcanic outbursts of passion, he gathered together all the mad hatred and the fighting instincts of an oppressed

[1] " Works," I, 292.

people." This explains the note of despair in the book, which made Mazzini say that the reader is more inclined to bury himself under the ruins of his country like Ferruccio, than to live to restore it. But " L'Assedio " was most effective in its day, a genuine battle-cry to the men of 1848, though it strikes the modern reader as terribly affected and exaggerated. Guerrazzi wrote a number of other novels in the same manner, poor in plot and ill-constructed—" Veronica Cibò," " Beatrice Cenci," " L'assedio di Roma," etc. His " Pasquale Paoli " (1860) is praised for the style ; but " L'assedio di Firenze " is certainly his best work. Guerrazzi's Italian is rich and pure, but his style is generally strained and over-rhetorical and does not ring true.

Not that it was natural to Guerrazzi to write in this way, as is proved by the admirable simplicity of the " Buco nel muro " (1862), a fresh, lively, natural tale of home life in which he appears just as he is ; or by the touching description of the girl brought to the hospital for an operation in the " Memorie " he wrote for Mazzini ; or by the charming little " Serpicina," written in prison in 1829. This delightful allegory is meant to prove man's inferiority to the other animals, a theory which Guerrazzi worked out at length and supported with considerable learning in " L'Asino." Here the humour has the grimness of Swift rather than the lightness of Sterne, whose influence, doubtless through Foscolo's translation, is to be traced in the " Buco nel muro."

Guerrazzi played an important part in the

revolutionary movements of the times. In 1848 he was Minister of the Interior in Montanelli's cabinet in Tuscany and one of the Triumvirs after the Grand Duke's flight. Finally, he was virtually dictator, a position thoroughly to his taste, for even a moderate man like Capponi, who knew him well, says that he had no real sympathy with democracy except as a means of establishing his own power, and all we hear of him corroborates this view. On the fall of the revolutionary government Guerrazzi was sentenced to penal servitude, but was exiled to Corsica instead, whence he soon managed to escape. He was several times elected deputy after the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy, and violently attacked the moderates. Needless to say, he made countless enemies, and at last he retired in disgust to his villa near Cecina, where he died in 1873.

The clericals also had their novelist in Antonio Bresciani, whose "L'Ebreo di Verona" (1850) and "Lorenzo il conscritto" were very popular with certain classes. The former especially threw ridicule on the revolution, though the author cannot withhold his admiration from Garibaldi and Mazzini. These novels seem puerile to a modern reader, especially in their characterisation; but the descriptions are exercises in correct, if uninspired Italian.

Giambattista Niccolini[1] (1782-1861) was, like Guerrazzi, a Tuscan. He was born near Pisa

[1] Bertana, "La Tragedia," c. 9. V. Morello, "Una Musa scomparsa," in "Vita italiana nel Risorgimento." F. de Sanctis, "La letter. ital. nel. secolo XIX."

of noble parents in poor circumstances. But, except for his patriotism and his democratic leanings, he had little in common with his violent fellow-countryman. The warmth of his republican views in 1790 resulted in a short imprisonment at Florence, where he afterwards spent nearly the whole of his life. He was first attached to the Archivio delle Riformazioni, and then became Professor of History and Mythology in the Institute of Fine Arts. He knew Monti, whose influence is traceable in his youthful " Pietà," and was a warm friend of Foscolo, who dedicated his " Chioma di Berenice " and other poems to him, and is said to have drawn him as Lorenzo Alderani in " Ortis." In 1810 Niccolini's tragedy of " Polissena " was awarded a prize by the Crusca. It was on strictly Greek lines, as were the next four tragedies he wrote. In 1815 he began a translation of Hone's " Douglas," but found it unsuitable and therefore made it the basis of a play of his own, " Matilde," in which Hone's mild violations of the sacred unities are carefully corrected. " Nabucco " (1816), which was published in London in 1819, is a political play inspired by Napoleon's fall. Nabucco (Napoleon) has returned from a Scythian expedition and finds himself opposed by an assembly of kings. Pius VII appears as the oppressed priest, Mitrane.

But Niccolini could not escape the influences of his time. " Matilde," in spite of its classical form, was romantic in subject. No man who had read Shakespeare, Byron and Schiller could remain a strict Alfierian, and in the second and best period

of his literary activity Niccolini's romantic tendencies steadily increased. "Rosmunda d'Inghilterra" (1839), and "Beatrice Cenci" (1838-44), in which Niccolini owes much to Shelley, are romantic dramas, though he always professed hatred of the new school. The others are all political in character. "Antonio Foscarini" (1827), like "Filippo Strozzi" (1847), is concerned with Alfieri's favourite theme of opposition to tyranny. The subject of the former, the tyranny of the Council of Three, was regarded as an insult to the defunct Republic at Venice, and Carrer replied by publishing some scenes from a proposed play on the same subject. "Ludovico Sforza" (1833) and "Giovanni da Procida" (1830) are attacks upon foreign domination. The subject of the latter is the Sicilian Vespers, but the story of the incestuous marriage of the brother and sister, in all innocence, is allowed to dwarf the main issue. It contains the well-known words, "Let the French recross the Alps and they shall return as brothers,"[1] upon hearing which the French ambassador is said to have remarked to the Austrian, "The letter is addressed to me, but it is meant for you."

Niccolini was one of the first to advocate Italian unity and the abolition of the temporal power.[2]

[1] "Il Franco
ripassi l'Alpi e tornerà fratello."

[2] "Sei pontefice o re? L'ultimo nome
mai non si udiva a Roma; e se di Cristo
il vicario tu sei, saper dovresti
che sol di spine fu la sua corona."
"Arnaldo," II, 8.

Italy could never be saved by a Pope, he maintained, and he was not shaken in his convictions by the opening of Pius IX's pontificate. Indeed, he regarded the Pope as the arch-foe. He was not anti-religious, but anti-clerical, and " Arnaldo da Brescia " (1843), the best of his tragedies, contains his political creed. It was eagerly devoured in its day, and it stirred patriotic feeling to the depths. It was smuggled from one end of Italy to another in false covers. But it bores the modern reader, as it did Guerrazzi when he first read it. It is enormously long, and, like everything of Niccolini's, purely lyrical. There is no action, no attempt to create real people, only an unending debate, conducted in interminable speeches, between the Brescian friar, Frederic Barbarossa and the English Pope, Adrian IV. As de Sanctis says, Arnaldo is a visionary with excellent intentions, " who realises its evil, but fails to understand the world in which he lives." The Pope is the only statesman in the play, which is all thought, and is altogether lacking in human action and passion. Following his usual method, de Sanctis traces these defects to Niccolini himself. He lived among his books apart from the world and was apparently entirely without personal affection, even for his own family. However, " Arnaldo " undoubtedly contributed to the success of the cause which its author and the men of his day had at heart. The appeals for Italian unity (*e.g.*, in I, 3), were vigorous and inspiring and were on everyone's lips at the time. But " Arnaldo " could never have been acted. With Niccolini poetical

tragedy in Italy definitely retired from the stage to the study, and has now, as elsewhere, become merged in the drama of everyday life.

But the national movement had its poets as well as its novelists and dramatists. One of the earliest was Gabriele Rossetti[1] (1783-1854), the father of Dante Gabriel, an Abruzzese who migrated to Naples, where he was a successful improvisatore and verse-writer, and where he obtained a post at the Museum. He was a Carbonaro and therefore welcomed the rising of 1820, for which he wrote his best-known ode, "La costituzione di Napoli del 1820." Foscolo had set the fashion of exile for conscience sake, and the risings at this time, which lodged Pellico in the Spielberg, drove Berchet and Rossetti to England. Thanks to the English admiral's wife, Rossetti escaped disguised as an English naval officer and went first to Malta, then to London, where he became Professor of Italian at King's College. His "Dimora in Inghilterra" and his ode on passing Naples on his way from Malta to England are among his best poems. He celebrated the principal events of the "Risorgimento," but his verse is not direct enough to be effective. De Sanctis calls it "the last echo of the Italian decadence," of which he considers it possesses all the characteristics, for it is fantastic, musical and rhetorical. Carducci, while admitting that Rossetti lacks Berchet's originality and terseness, praises him for his breadth of view and definite principles.

[1] G. Carducci, Preface to Rossetti's poems, 1861. F. de Sanctis, "La letter. ital. nel. secolo XIX."

He advocated a united kingdom of Italy, the abolition of the temporal power and of spiritual tyranny, and the brotherhood of oppressed nationalties, and he warmly defended Charles Albert against the attacks made upon him. Rossetti was an enthusiastic Dante scholar, but his strange allegorical interpretation of the "Divina Commedia," though stimulating and suggestive, has not met with general acceptance.

Something genuinely popular was, however, required to appeal to the nation as a whole—songs and lyrics with no more ambitious aim than to express simple ideas in tripping metres that cling to the memory. This was provided by the verses of Giovanni Berchet[1] (1783-1851), author of the "Lettera semiseria di Grisostomo," already mentioned (p. 177), who was born in Milan. After the risings of 1821 he fled to Switzerland and then to London, where he obtained employment in the business of a fellow-countryman. He avoided Foscolo and his extravagances, and set an excellent example to his brother exiles by his honest, hard-working life. Wide-spread indignation was aroused among the Italian exiles by England's sale of the Christian town of Parga to the Turks. Foscolo wrote a pamphlet on the subject, and it inspired Berchet's first poem, "I profughi di Parga" (1821). Then followed the "Romanze" (1822-6) and the "Romito del Cenisio." In the latter a foreigner

[1] See G. Mazzoni, "La poesia patriottica e G. Berchet," in "Vita ital. nel Risorg." De Sanctis, "La letter. ital. nel secolo XIX."

turns back from Italy owing to the account of the oppression under which it is groaning given him by a hermit as he crosses the Mont Cenis. This is perhaps Berchet's best poem. In "Clarina" the heroine urges her lover to strike a blow for Italy, which fails owing to the cowardice of the leaders. "Fantasie" (1829) is more ambitious. Here the victorious Lombard League is contrasted with the degenerate Italy of the poet's own day, and he tries to rouse his countrymen to expel the hated foreigner. The last, where Pellico's mother is weeping in the streets of Milan and cursing the Spielberg, is the best of these poems.

Berchet is not a great poet. He is uneven, often over-rhetorical, obscure and commonplace. But the importance of his poems was far greater than their artistic value. "It is useless for me to describe to you the impression they made upon his contemporaries; even among the women the enthusiasm rose to fever heat," says de Sanctis, who remembered their being passed from hand to hand in manuscript in Bourbon Naples. They were in everybody's mouth and were even written on the walls in 1848.[1] Verse like this, though despised by the superior person, speaks directly to the heart of a whole nation and produces results that we should look for in vain from Manzoni's odes. Berchet was called the "Tirtaeus of the

[1] See p. 289 for the effect of these well-known lines from the "Giuramento di Pontida," in the "Fantasie" on Carducci,

"Su! nell' irto increscioso Alemanno,
Su! Lombardi, puntate la spada," etc.

Lombard Carbonari." The movements of 1831 produced his ode to the Italian tricolor, those of 1848 brought him back to Italy, and he was in Milan during the Five Days. He warmly supported Charles Albert, the "Carignano esecrato" he had once so bitterly satirised in the poem which he would never afterwards allow to appear among his "Romanze." He settled in Turin, where he was several times elected a deputy. In politics he was a moderate.

Here we may mention Pietro Giannone's "L'esule" (1829), a romantic poem describing the sufferings of the exiled patriots of the day. Dialect poetry hardly comes within the scope of this book, but it is impossible to pass over Giuseppe Belli (1791-1863). His satirical sonnets in Roman dialect are among the best of their kind in the language, and are well worth reading.

The greatest of the patriotic poets of the day was undoubtedly Giuseppe Giusti[1] (1809-50). He was a Tuscan by birth, and was sent to finish his education at the University of Pisa, where he was better known to the Grand Duke's police than to the Professors. His conduct was so suspicious that it was thought best to keep him quietly at home for three years, and he did not take his degree in law till 1834. He went to Florence with the idea of practising at the bar, but soon devoted himself entirely to literature. An unfortunate love affair

[1] I. del Lungo, "La poesia del Giusti," in "Vita ital. nel, risorg." Carducci's preface to the selections in the "Diamante," ed. of his poems.

and a nervous, melancholy attack made a change advisable, and he went to Rome and Naples with his mother, to whom he was devoted. In 1845 he went to Milan on a visit to Manzoni, who greatly admired the pure Tuscan of his poems, and declared that if ten just men could save a city, ten Giustis could settle the language question once for all. The enthusiasm aroused by Pius IX made him lean for a moment, but only for a moment, towards the neo-Guelphs. He was an officer in the Civic Guard, but his health prevented his taking part in the war. He supported the constitutional movement of 1848, and was a conscientious deputy; but he hated advanced democracy, though he had no objection to a moderate republic, and he took no part in the Constitutional Assembly of 1849. He favoured the Grand Duke's return, but withdrew from public life when this was effected by Austrian arms, and in the following year he died suddenly of consumption at the house of his friend, Gino Capponi.

Pananti and Guadagnoli had led the way in satirical verse, but Giusti showed that he could do even better with his "Ghigliottina a vapore" (1833), and for the rest of his life he continued to pour out poems which were copied and read everywhere in Italy. Carducci ascribes his success to the fact that he was the first poet after Manzoni to go back to the actual life of the people. "When I sit down to write," he said, "I take off my gentleman's coat and don the peasant's cloak." This was very different from the usual custom of poets. Though his verses were the result of hard work, they appear

to be absolutely spontaneous. The sureness of touch and the precision that characterises them are such as one hardly expècts to find outside France. Thought and word seem to have come into being together. " The word hardly veils the idea and does not hamper it in the least." Lively, witty, easy and natural, Giusti has provided Italy with endless proverbs and types. He is a true artist, and can sing of the facts of everyday life in his poems without a trace of the commonplace which often disfigures work of this kind. But behind all the apparent lightness lay a strong moral purpose and deep feeling, which is most evident in the lyrics. He himself believed that he had sacrificed his chances of fame to his country's needs, and that his poems would perish with him, but though, like all occasional verse, they are bound to suffer from the effects of time, and to lose something of what they owe to the circumstances that gave them rise, there can be little doubt that they now hold an assured place in literature.

Giusti sought his inspiration in the events of the day. " Dies Irae " (1835), celebrates the death of " Cecco," the " Spielberg " Emperor, Francis I. " Terra dei Morti," one of the best-known of the political poems, is a reply to Lamartine's sneer at Italy as a land of the dead and at the Italians as " poussière humaine," while " L'Incoronazione " attacks the princes sheltering behind Austria. " Lo stivale," (1835), the metaphorical boot, complains that it wants a leg, " not German, be it understood, nor French, but one that belongs to its own country. And then it must be all of one

colour, not blue in one place, red and white in another, and yellow and black at the top." "Delenda Cartago" (1846), with its repetition of the phrase "e non vogliam Tedeschi," shows that the mere process of time carries man and the world on towards freedom. At every funeral and christening "a rascal dies and a liberal is born." A systematic massacre of the innocents could alone ensure Austrian supremacy. In "Sant' Ambrogio di Milano" (1846), Giusti expresses sympathy for the Bohemians and Croatians, themselves victims of Austrian rule, sent to hold in check Italians for a power which they detest. In "La Guerra" (1846), he declares that Mars has set up shop since the commercial origin of our Chinese war, and he foresees modern Europe sunk in a peace that grows more secure with the increase of armaments.[1]

His non-political poems are perhaps even better known. "Gingillino" is the proverbial Government clerk, who has been taught from childhood that he must break himself to the yoke if he expects to die with clothes on his back, who has passed all his examinations with credit and never held an opinion of his own about anything. The poem is full of witty lines.[2]

"Il Brindisi di Girella," the Italian Vicar of Bray, appeared with a dedication to Talleyrand in 1840. "Apologia del lotto" and "Sortilegio" expose the

[1] "Dormi, Europa, sicura;
più armi, più paura."

[2] *e.g.*, the proverb that "essere sta nell' avere," or Gingillino's creed,

"Io credo nella Zecca onnipotente,
e nel figlio suo, detto Zecchino."

exploitation of popular ignorance and superstition by those in power, while "Aruffa-popoli" (1848) is a skit on demagogues.

The serious lyrics are not as good as the others, but "Affetto d'una madre" is inspired by a strong, genuine feeling, while "A Gino Capponi" gives a noble expression to Giusti's ideals of art. He tells us he always softened the edge of his satire in the waters of charity and endeavoured to raise a laugh by his indignation[1]: and he is never cruel.

Giusti's Memoirs (1845-9) are generally ranked above his letters. The former are lucid, spontaneous and natural, while the latter were obviously written for publication and as models of style. Carducci calls them "pedantry in shirt-sleeves," for they abound in Florentine expressions. D'Ancona and Bacci point out that in verse Giusti's form was absolutely original, and that he was the first to give a literary colouring to the Tuscan of his day. If he was overrated during his lifetime he was certainly underrated immediately after his death, and the present generation has probably assigned him his true position.

The revolution of 1848 produced no real poetry in Italy. Manzoni's ode, though published then, had been written in 1821. By this time the whole of the nation's strength was required for action.

[1] "Se con sicuro viso
tentai piaghe profonde,
di carità nell' onde
temprai l'ardito ingegno
e trassi dallo sdegno il mesto riso."
"A una giovinetta."

But there are a number of popular songs of more historical than political importance. Angelo Brofferio (1802-66), Cavour's opponent, who suffered persecution and imprisonment for his opinions, was a prolific writer in dialect, as well as the author of " I miei tempi " and " La storia del parlamento e del Piemonte." He is inferior to Berchet and owes much to Béranger. Alessandro Poerio, who died from the effects of a wound during the siege of Venice in 1848, was a follower of Leopardi, and Tommaseo considered that his work, though over-polished, was absolutely spontaneous. Better known is Goffredo Mameli,[1] the young romantic poet who perished during the defence of Rome when only twenty-two, but not before he had written the " Canto del popolo " in Genoa in 1846 and the well-known " Fratelli d'Italia " in 1847. This, as set to music by Novario, became the hymn of 1848. Luigi Mercantini (1821-72), afterwards Professor of Literature in Palermo, celebrated the principal men and events of the Risorgimento in popular verse and was the author of the famous Garibaldi's hymn, " Si scopron le tombe, si levano i morti," set to music by Olivieri, and of other patriotic poems such as " Patrioti, all' Alpi andiamo." Other songs are Bosi's " Addio del volontario " and Bertoldi's " Con l'azzurra coccarda nel petto." Read in the cold light of to-day they strike us as over-rhetorical, but the men who first sang them were filled with the spirit which fired their authors and were roused by them to an enthusiasm of which only an echo can now reach us.

[1] See Carducci, " Opere," Vol. III.

CHAPTER XII

THE DECAY OF ROMANTICISM. CARDUCCI AND THE CLASSICAL REVIVAL

By 1849 the national movement had begun to flow in its natural channel, and it became clear that the unity of Italy, if it was to be accomplished at all, would be accomplished under the House of Savoy. The Mediæval ideals which the romantic movement had revived had been useful in rousing men to emulate the great deeds of their ancestors, but they could be of no practical value. Indeed, even before 1848 the romantic movement was obviously tottering to its fall, but as yet there was no attempt at a revival. In a period of transition, when no man could tell what the morrow would bring forth, it was impossible for new literary tendencies to take definite shape. The fate of the country must be settled first. Consequently, for the next few years everything went on as before. Romantic poetry was produced, though Romanticism had already become a mere mannerism. It was either mawkish and sentimental or a feeble imitation of Byron's misanthropic melancholy. Without an ideal, and with no message to deliver it drifted further and further from reality. It was the kind of poetry to which the men of the period were accustomed, and they were too absorbed in more important matters to enquire into its merits. Hence writers like Prati and Zanella were hailed as great poets even by critics of ability.

The chief of these later romanticists was Giovanni Prati (1814-84)[1], a native of Campo Maggiore in the Trentino, whose poetic gifts manifested themselves early. His "Edmenegarda" (1841) owed not a little of its success to the fact that it was based upon a contemporary scandal. At the time it was praised for its modernity, but Carducci points out that it is thoroughly romantic and conventional. "To turn truth into verse is not to write a true poem. 'Edmenegarda' is an allegorical fantasy, all tears and sobs, all description and digression, all apostrophes to the heroine, to Venice, etc., the mechanism, in fact, of Byron's poetic tales, combined with the nebulous cloudiness almost of 'Jocelyn.'" But it made Prati's name, and he continued to write with extraordinary fluency to the end. In 1847 he was imprisoned by the Austrians and then expelled from Venice for loyalty to the monarchy. He fled to Tuscany, but Guerrazzi drove him out, in spite of his ill-health, on account of his republican views and justified his conduct by fabricating infamous charges against him. He was made a deputy and followed the capital from Turin to Florence and then to Rome, where he was made a Senator and where he died.

Prati's works fill five volumes. In the "Conte di Riga" and "Satana" Byron is his model. But his lyrics, "Canti lirici," "Canti per L'l popolo," "Ballate," etc., contain his best work at this time. The ballads are imitations of Carrer, but without his inspiration. Carducci likens them to a

[1] See Carducci in Vol. III of his works.

combination of Bengal lights and blaring trumpets, and says they suggest Verdi's music. Prati's imagination is rich and exuberant ; his feelings are easily moved, but they have no depth. He is, however, a finished artist in verse, as an artist like Carducci readily acknowledged, declaring that " after Vincenzo Monti he is the only one of the moderns possessing a command of poetical language," " the one genuinely and richly endowed poet " of his school. But he is uneven, sometimes over-polishing his verse, at other times careless to a degree. He was very popular in his day, especially with the ladies and with young people, though his defects were fully recognised by more discerning critics. The classical manner he adopted in his later years shows him at his best. The " Canto d'Igea " from " Armando " is now the best known of all his poems, and Carducci cannot speak too highly of " Iside " (1873), written in different metres, in which he has made excellent use of the pruning-knife. So even Prati died a classicist. . . . . .

Giuseppe Regaldi (1809-1883), originally a very successful improvisatore, with regard to whom Lamartine said, " Je suis le lac, toi le torrent," was a lesser light of the same school. Though rhetorical and overblown, the verse of this " last of the troubadours," as Carducci called him, is flowing and easy. He set himself especially to sing the triumphs of science—the making of the Suez Canal and the " Traforo dell' Alpi Cozie," while " Il telegrafo elettrico," dedicated to Sir James Hudson, celebrates the laying of the cable between Genoa and Sardinia.

Aleardo Aleardi (1812-73) who was twice imprisoned by the Austrians, won popularity by his gentle melancholy and sentimentality. His imaginary sorrows are of the usual romantic kind. They awake no sympathy nowadays, and he is fond of the marvellous. But he has a turn for description and a genuine love of nature, and he is more restrained in his style than Prati.

More important is Giacomo Zanella (1820-89), a patriotic priest with strong religious convictions who was deprived of his teaching post by the Austrian Government. On the annexation of the Veneto to the Kingdom of Italy he was made Professor of Italian literature in the University of Padua. Chiarini[1] says that his poems, already known in manuscript, made a sensation when published in 1868, the year of the appearance of Carducci's "Levia Gravia." Del Lungo hailed him as the new poet, and he was actually the favourite poet of the period between 1865-70, when Florence was the capital of Italy. These were years of caution and moderation and Zanella was above all things moderate, anxious to reconcile religion and science, religion and politics. But he is no feeble romanticist. He is classical in form and had carefully trained himself by translations and by a study of the classics before attempting to write. He is too placid, too self-conscious to be a real lyric poet, and his verse, though polished and musical, is cold. He was fond of nature and of a

[1] Nuov. Ant., June 1st, 1888—an admirable article on Zanella.

calm, peaceful country life. He is now only remembered by his "Conchiglia fossile," which is by far the best of his poems. But he did good work as a teacher and his History of Italian Literature from the second half of the eighteenth century is still useful.

The days of the old romantic novel were over, and "Cento Anni" (1859-60)[1] by Giuseppe Rovani (1818-74) was something new for Italy. The author was the popular leader of the lively, dissipated Bohemian set of artists and writers in Milan who looked to the later French romanticists as their masters in the art of life as well as in that of writing. "Cento Anni" is the history of two separate families from the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle to the Five Days in Milan, and brings before us a vast number of characters and events. Rovani was indefatigable in consulting documents and memoirs and in collecting anecdotes, but the only character who is always convincing in the story is the villain, Galantino. The book was very popular.

A far better work of the same kind is "Le confessioni di un ottuagenario" by Ippolito Nievo (1831-61). Though written in 1757-8, it was not published till after the author's death. Nievo's adventurous career is typical of the period. His anti-Austrian leanings date from his boyhood and his complicity in the Mantua plot obliged his family to place him in hiding, when he wrote his poems and a play. His first novel appeared in 1856. He served under Garibaldi in 1859 and was made a colonel in the Sicilian expedition, from which he never

[1] Albertazzi, "Il Romanzo," II, 5.

expected to return. After the campaign he was crossing for the second time to the mainland on the "Ercole," when it was lost with all on board.

Of later years there has been a great revival of interest in Nievo, and the "Confessioni" is generally regarded as the one novel of the day that deserves to survive when tried by the standard of the "Promessi Sposi." "It brings before us Venice during the last days of the Republic, the Neapolitan provinces in 1799, the siege of Genoa, the Italian Republic, then Venice and Naples once more, and the life of the exiles in London." The story carries us down to 1848, but the latter part is unfinished and often prolix, as it was never revised. The earlier chapters, with their vivid picture of the old feudal society before the Revolution, are perhaps the best. They contain the recollections of the author's youth and describe places he had known all his life. The many characters are well drawn and are kept distinct, while in the descriptions of scenery Nievo is as sparing as Manzoni. Without violating the best traditions of the romantic novel, he is modern in his characterisation and not in the least conventional, and the manly tone and vivid colouring contrast favourably with the kind of work in vogue at this time. We must just mention "Lorenzo Benoni" and "Doctor Antonio," by Mazzini's fellow-exile, G. Ruffini (1807-81), which were originally written in English and are still sometimes read. "Lorenzo Benoni" is largely autobiographical and contains a portrait of Mazzini in Fantasio.

Bertana says that Gozzoletti's " Paolo " (1854-7) is the last real literary tragedy. The author attempted to bring about a revival by contrasting the Pagan and Christian sides of the Roman world in the days of Nero, but it cannot be said that the result is very original, either in plot or characterisation.

Pietro Cossa (1830-81), a Roman by birth, was a popular writer of tragedies in verse, who possessed the stage-craft which is so often lacking in works of this kind; and it was in this rather than in its poetical qualities that the merit of his work lies. He is, in fact, a modern dramatist who might almost as well have written his plays in prose. Their strength lies chiefly in the excellent opportunities they afford to good actors. He began as a disciple of Alfieri, but the success of " Nerone " (1870) showed him his true vocation. He loved Rome passionately, and his Roman plays, the best of which was " Messalina," contain his best work. The others, such as " Cecilia," " Cola di Rienzo " or " I Borgia " are not so good. " Plauto e il suo secolo " is an excellent play. His blank verse is tragic and dignified, eminently adapted for recitation, and his characters are real and alive. Franchetti declares that we have only to re-read a scene by Cossa to convince ourselves of his ability to take the narratives left by historians and breathe into them the glow of a new life.

Paolo Ferrari (1822-89) was an even greater master of stage-craft than Cossa, and his numerous comedies were by far the most popular in modern

Italy. Many of his characters, such as the Marchese Colombi, have become household words. His work divides itself naturally into three periods. First come the historical comedies (1851-6), universally recognised as his masterpieces, which give us vivid pictures of eighteenth century life, and of which "Goldoni e le sue commedie" and "Parini e la sua satira" are the greatest. Then there are the popular comedies of everyday life, such as "Codicillo dello zio veneziano" and "La medicina di una ragazza ammalata." This was the type of comedy by which he had first attracted attention in dialect, and he perfected it during the middle period of his career. Lastly, he turned his attention to plays with a purpose in the French style: "Cause ed effetti" and "Il duello" are, perhaps, the best in this manner. In these the characters and the dialogue are thoroughly alive, but the purpose is allowed to dominate the play and direct the action instead of being directed by it. On the whole, however, Ferrari keeps a very high level in his work and he is a playwright of whom any nation might be proud. G. Gallina, a Venetian, like Goldoni, gives us realistic pictures of middle-class life in Venice in his comedies. He has finer feelings and a more profound psychological insight than his master and a deep sympathy with the weak and the suffering, but he has none of the inimitable life and bustle and gaiety that are inseparable from Goldoni.

"Do not praise me, do not praise me!" said Aleardi once. "Twenty years hence nothing of all this will remain. This was not the way.

Another man has found the right road, and if he is not in too great a hurry he will win lasting glory." The "other man" was Giosuè Carducci[1] (1835-1907), the greatest poet of modern Italy. He was born at Val di Castello in Tuscany. His father was a doctor, who belonged to a family which had given four "gonfalonieri" to the state in its better days, but his political opinions had hampered his career. Consequently he was obliged to gain his livelihood in the unhealthy Tuscan Maremma, which was to inspire some of his son's best poems, such as the "Idillo Maremmiano," where he tells of his early love for a peasant girl of the district, and the beautiful "Davanti San Guido." "Sweet country, whence I brought like to thyself, my haughty character, and scornful song, and my heart where hate and love are never at rest."[2] If these were the characteristics of the Maremma, Carducci was certainly its true son. He was thoroughly aggressive by nature, with a real affection for a good enemy, and was engaged in fierce controversies at most periods of his life. His fondness for beginning a stanza with "I hate" (odio) is eminently characteristic.

Carducci's father was an ardent Manzonian and gave the boy his first lessons in Virgil and Tasso

[1] G. Chiarini, "Memorie della vita di G. Carducci" (Firenze, 1903). A. Jeanroy, "Giosuè Carducci, l'homme et le poète" (Paris, 1911). J. Dornis, "La poésie italienne contemporaine."

[2] "Dolce paese, onde portai conforme
l'abito fiero e lo sdegnoso canto
e il petto ove odio e amor mai non s'addorme."
"Traversando la Maremma Toscana."

himself. It was doubtless almost as much his independence of character as his natural inclinations which drove him into opposition to the writer whom his pastors and masters held in such veneration, for when he was sent to school in Florence in 1847, he found that his priestly teachers shared his father's tastes. At school Carducci rapidly developed that love for the classics and hatred of priests which became an integral part of his nature. Homer and Tasso, Virgil and Horace and the great humanists of the Trecento were his favourites. In 1856 he took a good degree at Pisa, and then taught at San Miniato till he lost his post owing to his political opinions. Thrown on his own resources, he settled in Florence, took pupils, wrote articles for the papers and undertook to edit some volumes of the "Diamante" series of Italian classics, which was just being started by Barbèra, a publisher then as unknown as himself. Carducci only received some £3 for a volume, but his introductions have since taken rank as classics. In 1859 he was given a teaching appointment at Pistoia and in the following year Terenzio Mamiani offered him a Professorship in the University of Bologna, where he taught for forty-four years.

Carducci's powers matured slowly. In the "Juvenilia" (1857) he had not yet assimilated his learning, and developed a manner of his own. The imitations of Petrarch are conventional, and much inferior to those of the classics. "Levia Gravia" (1868) contains the first signs of his strong individuality and the "Ode to Satan" marks his adhesion

to the Republican party. It dates from 1863, but was not published till 1865, and only attracted general attention when printed in the "Popolo" of Bologna in 1869, just before the Œcumenical Council. "Poesie" (1871) contains besides his earlier work, the "Decennali," political poems celebrating many of the principal historical events after Aspromonte, which marked Carducci's definite breaking with the monarchy. They afterwards formed the nucleus of "Giambi ed epodi" (1882) and were followed by the "Rime Nuove" (1873). During these later years Carducci had become an ardent student of most of the greatest poets of France and Germany, hitherto almost unknown to him. Many of the "Decennali" are close imitations of Hugo's "Châtiments," while according to Jeanroy it was Heine who first revealed to him about this time the secret of personal poetry,[1] and thus became the most potent factor in bringing his powers to maturity. After 1870 various government appointments obliged him to travel extensively and gain that wide knowledge of Italy which did so much to inspire the historical odes. The appearance of the first series of "Odi barbare" (1877) definitely assured his position and established his right to rank as a great innovator. Two more series were published in 1882 and 1889. His power of associating a deep feeling for nature with important events of history is continually developing, and his last volume, "Rime e ritmi" (1899), finds

[1] For these imitations see Jeanroy, *op. cit.*, p. 102 and passim.

him fully reconciled to the constitutional government, hopeful of the future of his country and eager to sing of the glorious events that accomplished its unity.

Carducci's life was comparatively uneventful, but, though he never took an active part in politics, it is interesting and important to trace the gradual development of his political opinions. To Carducci Italian unity came before every other consideration. He began as an enthusiast for the House of Savoy, as his Ode to Victor Emmanuel proves. Then, when he thought the king had taken his hand from the plough, he became an ardent Republican, and it was at this time that "Ça irà," celebrating the French Revolution, was written. In 1868 he was at first transferred, then temporarily suspended from his post after signing an address to Mazzini. But in 1870 the great work was at last accomplished and Carducci's views gradually changed. In 1878 he wrote his ode, "Alla Regina d'Italia" to Queen Margherita, who had the highest opinion of his work, and who, in 1902, bought Carducci's library in order to prevent its being dispersed after his death. The poet retained the use of it as long as he lived.[1] It is thought that Carducci's admiration for Crispi may have contributed to his political conversion. He regarded monarchy as a mere name and declined to believe that "even His Majesty King Humbert is a real, genuine monarchist." The Preface to

[1] It will not be thrown open to the public in Bologna until the difficult task of arranging and editing Carducci's papers has been completed.

"Giambi ed Epodi" expresses his satisfaction with the existing state of affairs and elsewhere[1] he declares that monarchy alone can keep Italy strong and united, and he avows his loyalty to Humbert. In 1890 Carducci was made a Senator, and in the following year, when he consented to act as "godfather" to a flag presented by the ladies of Bologna to the monarchical club, his attitude gave rise to a violently hostile demonstration from the Republican students.

We shall deal with his critical work elsewhere. As a teacher he was painstaking and conscientious, for he spared no trouble in the preparation of his lectures, and eminently inspiring. When introducing a bill for his special pension in 1904, Orlando said that "his austere methods of insisting on conscientious research radically reformed his pupils' mental habits." In 1906 he was awarded a Nobel prize for literature. His death was mourned by the whole nation.

Carducci was before all things a champion of classicism. He once gave as the principal articles of his creed, "In politics, Italy before everything; in æsthetics, classical poetry before everything; in ordinary life, frankness and strength before everything." And his hatred of Romanticism, as well as of the Church, was patriotic in origin. Romanticism meant foreign domination, nay, German domination in literature and a corruption of the glorious traditions of the Latin races by the Northern barbarians. It aimed at a revival of mediæval

[1] "Opere," XII, 440.

feudalism and mediæval Christianity as against the old pagan classicism. This attempt to enslave the national intellect to the country which had already enslaved the nation itself seemed to him a danger that must be resisted at all costs, and his poems are full of attacks on the school he hated. To Guerrazzi Romanticism meant the sun, classicism the moon. But to Carducci the sun, the giver of life and fruitfulness, is the symbol of classicism; the moon, which ripens neither fruit nor flower and fosters only unproductive love, stands for Romanticism, and he gives full vent to his hatred of its "stupid, round face" and vague, uncertain light.[1] Till 1858 his inspiration was entirely classical; then, at Guerrazzi's suggestion, he began to read the great foreign romantics, and the debt he owes them proves that it was no intellectual antipathy which prevented his appreciating the best among them. But in spite of their influence upon him Carducci never wavered in his loyalty to the classicism, with which all the best traditions of Italy were so intimately associated.

The fact that the Church sided with the national enemy obliged patriotic Italians to be at least anti-clerical in sympathy, and Carducci was something more. At heart, like so many Italians of all ages, he was a Pagan. To Carducci classical mythology was no mere poetical machinery, but something alive and real. "Other gods die," he declares, "but the divinities of Greece know no setting. They sleep in the trees and flowers that

[1] "Classicismo e romanticismo."

gave them birth, above the mountains, the rivers and the everlasting seas " ;[1] and they reveal themselves to a poet or a lover. He felt his kinship with the great Romans of old in every fibre. Nowhere does he give finer expression to this idea than in " Alle fonti di Clitumno," perhaps the best of the " Odi barbare." " I feel my ancient country in my heart and the gods of Italy fanning my heated brow."[2] But there was nothing decadent in Carducci's paganism. To him it did not mean emancipation from the moral law. No man was more violent in his hatred of the realistic school as represented by " Stecchetti " and woe betide any student who ventured to send him a poem of the kind. But he had all a pagan's delight in life for its own sake, a simple, frugal, healthy, hard-working life on the beautiful earth, where all the virtues and patriotism and self-sacrifice in a noble cause found full scope, but without any of the asceticism he loathed. Yet even Carducci's paganism is only a latter day paganism. Its want of repose and the violence of its opposition to the religion of his country shows that it is separated from the old world by centuries of Christianity.

He loves the country and every aspect of country

[1] " Muiono gli altri dei ; di Grecia i numi
non sanno occaso ; ei dormon ne'materni
trouchi e ne' fiori, sopra i monti i fiumi
i mari eterni."
" Primavere elleniche " (2).

[2] " Sento in cuor l'antica
patria e allegiarni su l'accesa fronte
gl'itali dei."

life—the great golden harvest that calls for the scythe, the budding grapes beginning to ripen in the spring, the Umbrian lad plunging the struggling sheep in the stream, the sunburnt mother with her feet bare sitting by the cottage door and suckling her child, while its father, with a goat-skin round his waist like a Faun of old, drives his team afield. But above all the ox, with its huge, black, wet nostrils, soft-eyed, snow-white, loved of the gentle Virgil, breathed a feeling of strength and peace into his heart.[1] No Northerner can hope to realise quite what Horace and Virgil mean to a Southerner like Carducci, conscious of the old Italian blood in his veins, and "nursed upon the self-same hill" where so many of the old traditions still survive. What could be more pagan than his first impression of death? One glorious June day he was sitting in school, listening to the priest outraging the verb "amo," when his eyes wandered to the window and lighted on a cherry-tree, red with fruit, and then to the hills and the sky, and the distant curve of the sea-shore. Suddenly, as if from the very sources of being within him, there welled up a consciousness of death and with it the formless nothing and himself lying cold and motionless in the black earth on just such another day when all nature was teeming with life. This early vision of death often haunted him in later years.[2]

To Carducci the Church stood for the hated

[1] See "Alle fonti del Clitumno," "Al bove," and other poems.

[2] "Rimembranze di sicuola." See "Fuori alla Certosa di Bologna," for the same idea.

Austrian rule and for opposition to freedom and progress. This is the dominant note of the Ode to Satan, which was written in a single night and therefore lacks the finish of his best work. It was originally to have been an Ode to Apollo and its author tells us that it is meant to express the revolt of humanity against the tyranny of dogma and of dynastic feudalism. Satan is no longer the Spirit of Evil, but takes rank with the Prometheus and Atlas of " I due Titani," for which Carducci is largely indebted to Shelley's " Prometheus Unbound." In his train are all the greatest leaders of reform and progress such as Luther and Savonarola. But it is the ascetic side of Christianity that Carducci disliked above all things, the strange company of the " Fonti del Clitumno " that crosses the plain in black sackcloth singing litanies, that tears men from the sacred plough, from their aged fathers and their wives in the prime of life to lead a useless existence apart from the world. In " In una Chiesa Gotica " he bids farewell to the Semitic god whose mysteries are dominated by death and from whose Gothic churches the sun is shut out, and goes forth to the bright fields with Lydia, whom he would like to see dancing with a chorus of maidens in honour of Apollo. " Yes, Giosuè Carducci was a Pagan," says Pascoli, " because he loved life ; but he was also a Christian, for he loved self-sacrifice." Poems like " Santa Maria degli Angeli " and " La Chiesa di Polenta " show that there were aspects of Christianity which appealed to him, but at heart he had no sympathy with revealed religion.

Thoroughly impregnated with classical literature, and an enthusiastic admirer of Horace, Carducci was naturally attracted by the oft-tried experiment of reviving classical metres in modern poetry. His plan was, says Ferrari,[1] " to reproduce Latin verse with the syllables, accents and pauses which the Italian ear marks, without taking quantity into consideration. As Carducci had to express ideas new to the Italian lyric, he revived this method, extended it, gave it fixed rules and harmonised it in such a way that he may be called its fortunate inventor." The result was the " Odi Barbare," as Carducci called them, because they would have seemed as barbarous to the Romans of old as they did to a contemporary, accustomed to the usual forms. The first series appeared in 1877, a few days after the " Postuma di Lorenzo Stecchetti," two remarkable volumes with which Zanichelli opened his " Biblioteca Elzeviriana." Carducci's mission was to restore the cult of form in Italy. Rhyming is so easy in Italian and the popularising of poetry in order to serve the national cause had so debased poetical form that the only way of salvation seemed to him to lie in increasing the difficulties of the craftsmanship. " I hate the usual poetry," he declares in the prelude to the " Odi Barbare." " Give me the strophe, all alert, soaring with flap of wing and rhythmic beat of foot in the choruses ; I seize it in full flight by the pinion, it turns and

[1] Quoted on p. 108 of Mazzoni and Picciola's " Antologia Carducciana."

resists."[1] The "Alla rima" at the beginning of the "Rime Nuove" ends, "Hail, o rhyme; give me a flower for love and for hate an arrow," and he now abandoned it altogether.

Carducci did not slavishly follow the Latin model. He took what seemed to him to be the essential characteristics of the form he was adopting and made this the basis of his system, *e.g.*, in the hexametre, the division into two unequal parts. Hence he is most successful in metres like the sapphic or asclepiadic, where the difference between the component lines is so marked that it is comparatively easy to reproduce their effects. The alcaics and elegiacs, according to Ovidio, are comparative failures. The "Odi Barbare" at first gave rise to a violent controversy, but Chiarini, and more especially Guido Mazzoni, the most distinguished of Carducci's followers, and d'Annunzio in his "Elegie romane" (1892) showed that the master could be successfully imitated. It is now, however, generally admitted that metrical poetry will not become naturalised in Italy and that the "Odi Barbare" will stand alone. Carducci himself seems to have felt that he had not altogether succeeded during his later years.[2] But the importance of Carducci's example in restoring form to its rightful place in Italian poetry cannot be over-estimated.

[1] "Odio l'usata poesia . . . .
a me la strofe vigile, balzante
co'l plauso e 'l piede ritmico ne' cori:
per l'ala a volo io còlgola, si volge
ella e repugna."

[2] See Jeanroy, p. 213.

Everyone must be struck by the extraordinary range of learning, classical, mediæval and modern, and the wonderful power of assimilation displayed in Carducci's mature work. He himself declared that his lineage must be traced from "Alfieri, Parini, Monti, Foscolo, Leopardi: through them and with them I went back to the ancients and learnt to know Dante and Petrarch. Nor did I lose sight of them even during my excursions into foreign literature." Leopardi's learning was profound, but it was æsthetic rather than historical, whereas history had an irresistible attraction for Carducci. "Sol nel passato è il bello, sol ne la morte è il vero," in the ode on Shelley's tomb, expresses his feeling, for he held that the past alone can be seen in its true proportion; the present is too changing, too near to us. All romance lies in the past. For Carducci the great events of history were clearly associated with the scenes where they took place. As we have seen, they begin to be prominent in his work when his opportunities for travelling increased, that is, in the "Rime Nuove," and the part they play grows in importance as time goes on. Rome is, of course, Carducci's chief source of inspiration, as in the magnificent sapphics of "Alle fonti del Clitumno," where his power of associating modern ideas with the old classical Italy is seen at its best, or in the alcaics of "Nell' annuale della fondazione di Roma," or of the beautiful "Sîrmione." Others, like "Jaufrè Rudel," "Su i campi di Marengo," and the eminently characteristic "Il canto d'amore," which shows

us nearly every aspect of Carducci, are suggested by mediæval history, while the Risorgimento has inspired "Cadore," to mention one among many. "Miramar" finds its subject in the fate of the hapless Emperor Maximilian in Mexico, and the death of the Prince Imperial is celebrated in a sapphic ode in which the doctrine of Nemesis is splendidly worked out. Others, again, like "Una sera di San Pietro," or "Alla stazione in una mattina di autunno," an admirably poetical, yet realistic treatment of the subject, are thoroughly modern in character.

But it is useless to endeavour to make even a cursory mention of the principal odes. That on Shelley's tomb, in elegiacs, is one of the best of them all. Carducci learnt English late in life and, like most modern Italian poets, he was attracted by Byron—not the Byron, he tells us, who veiled his sorrows under a cynical laugh, but the Byron who, "radiant with fateful valour," answered the cry of a people at war[1]—and by Shelley, the champion of freedom, the Shelley of "Prometheus Unbound," "the Titan spirit in a maiden's form," who was caught up by Sophocles from the living embrace of Thetis to the island of the heroes, where Œdipus wanders with Lear, and Roland with Hector, and Cordelia with her "Greek sister" Antigone. "Clytemnestra stands on the shore by the Queen of Scots in the moonlight, and they bathe their white arms in the sea," and the sea flows back, swollen with blood, and their wailing echoes along the

[1] "A C. C., mandandogli poemi di Byron."

rocky coast. One inevitably thinks of "all the perfumes of Arabia," which seems always to be ringing in the ears of a very different poet, d'Annunzio.

Carducci's language is absolutely pure, his style vigorous and well-sustained. All excess of thought or feeling, at least in the "Odi Barbare," is checked by his classical training. In no poet are the descriptions of scenery more vivid and accurate and, at the same time, more personal. There is no unnecessary detail. He touches rapidly on the main points of the landscape—for his great historical odes nearly all begin with a description of the scene—and then develops the narrative portion in regular order. He combines the feeling of the ancients for nature with the pictorial powers of the moderns. But Carducci, great as he is, can never be a popular poet. His Italian is not easy, for the thought is always as closely packed as the language can bear. The allusions are beyond the powers of the average man to explain, and elaborate commentaries will be necessary to make his poems thoroughly intelligible. The sources of his inspiration were extraordinarily varied. He was a University Professor, one of the most learned of his day, and the learning in his poems grew more profound with each volume, reaching its climax in the "Rime e Retmi." He was too far above the crowd to attempt to write down to it, and he had no intention of trying, for he believed in raising the people, not in degrading the educated classes to its level. "The people's wish is to raise itself, a worthy aim; it does not want us to demean

ourselves and utter senile babble to keep it in its position of inferiority."

Carducci is hardly less eminent as a prose-writer. What could be better, for instance, than the descriptions in the prose parts of "Ca ira," or than the early reminiscences in the "A proposito di alcuni giudizi su Alessandro Manzoni"? From these we shall take the account of his first hearing Berchet's verses, mentioned on p. 260. "Blessed verses! Even now, as I repeat them, I must bound to my feet and shout them aloud, as I did when first I heard them. And I heard them from a woman's lips, from the lips of my mother! It was on Easter Monday, 1847; and a glorious spring sun was laughing in the blue, blue sky, and five fishing-boats were gliding over the sea in the distance, swift, graceful and white as the nymphs of old, and on the hills even the old ruined mediæval towers looked less weary among the thick emerald green of the grass and the trees, and everywhere there was abundance of flowers—flowers on the plants, flowers in the grass, flowers in earth and sky, flowers of the most beautiful yellow, the deepest red and the loveliest carnation. How beautiful is peach-blossom in spring! Yet, after hearing these lines, I saw nothing more, or rather I saw everything black; I was possessed by a wild desire to kill Germans."

Carducci's greatest piece of prose is, however, the magnificent speech he delivered on Garibaldi, on June 4th, 1882, two days after the General's death, in the Teatro Brunetti at Bologna. In the

opinion of Mazzoni and Picciola, since Lorenzo de' Medici's Apology, if such a comparison is possible, there has been no such oratory in Italy, for in it " the feeling rises to the heights of an Ode of Pindar, combining the mythical with the real." No more suitable ending to an account of Carducci could be found than its closing sentences. " In the Homeric age in Greece their companions in arms and their fellow-countrymen gathered round the funeral pyres of the heroes and threw into the flames the possessions they held most dear.[1] . . . I do not ask so much of the Italians : I would have political parties continue to exist, because they are the reason of liberty. But I would have these parties, beginning with the Monarchists, who boast of Giuseppe Garibaldi as their ally, and ending with the Socialists, who consider that he founded them, or at least made them efficient, throw upon the pyre which will smoke by the sea, not the possessions they hold most dear, but all the worst that is in them."

[1] Garibaldi wished his body to be burnt on Caprera, and Carducci afterwards expressed characteristic indignation at his wish not having been carried out.

CHAPTER XIII

HISTORY, CRITICISM AND THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

In this chapter we shall confine ourselves to a brief account of the most prominent writers. A systematic history of the prose of the last century would be beyond the scope of this work, and would be very difficult for a foreigner to compile without the assistance of some authoritative work, such as Mazzoni's still unpublished "Ottocento," to guide him.

Several important histories were written during the early part of the nineteenth century, but they were literary histories, for the terrible new documentary school which has dethroned Clio and transferred her domain from art to science, had not yet arisen. Three important authors attempted to revive the old classical style in history and took Livy and Tacitus, Machiavelli and Guicciardini for their models. Chief of these was Carlo Botta (1766-1837), a Piedmontese, whose liberal views obliged him to leave his country after a term of imprisonment. He attached himself to the French army as a doctor and accompanied it in its occupation of Italy. In 1797 he published "Proposizioni ai Lombardi di una maniera di uno governo libero," and he played a prominent part in politics during the next few years. But he was in favour of a united independent Italy, and consequently opposed to

Napoleon. In 1804 he went to Paris as deputy for the Dora department, and there a conversation in the house of Manzoni's mother resulted in his writing the "Storia della guerra dell' independenza degli Stati Uniti d'America." It took him three years to write, and appeared in 1809. It was very favourably received as the first worthy history of the subject and was translated into French and English. But it sold poorly in Italian, and Botta was glad to dispose of the copies which remained on his hands as waste paper to pay the expenses of his wife's illness.

On the separation of Piedmont from France he thought it prudent to become a naturalised French subject, and from 1817 to 1822 he was Rector of the Academy at Rouen. In 1834 he published his "Storia d'Italia dal 1789 al 1814," which rapidly went through fourteen editions and was awarded a prize by the Crusca ; but this was all that its author ever received for it. The earlier part is too long in proportion to the latter, and Botta's political principles vary considerably as the work proceeds, for disgust at the excesses of the Revolution made him sigh for a return of Joseph II's enlightened rule. But the story is told easily, and with becoming dignity, and the book deserved its success. Botta had himself been concerned in many of the events described and this adds warmth and colour to his narrative, though it makes him less impartial than in his earlier work. The "Histoire des peuples italiens depuis Constantin jusqu' à 1814" (1825), afterwards translated into Italian, has little

historical value. But a number of admirers soon agreed to pay Botta £240 a year for six years on condition that he should complete Guicciardini's history and the "Storia d'Italia continuata da quella del Guicciardini fino al 1789," which he had begun in 1826, appeared in 1832 in ten volumes. It is a mere compilation, for Botta despised detail, holding that it could not affect our general view of history, and all the tribe of diggers among archives. In 1831 he returned to Piedmont, where he was received with marked distinction by Charles Albert and given a pension. Botta's fame has diminished in the great change that has come over our views on history and on style. He is, in fact, more a rhetorician than a historian, delighting in stately narrative, picturesque description and splendid speeches in the manner of the classical histories. He devotes as much space to a village feast that takes his fancy as to the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy. The obsolete Tuscanisms, for which Zanella considers a dictionary necessary, gave rise to the remark, even in his own day, that his histories were written for his ancestors rather than for posterity. But he was certainly the greatest Italian historian of his day.

Next in importance stands Pietro Colletta (1775-1831), a distinguished Neapolitan soldier who led the daring expedition sent by Murat to attack Capri with brilliant success. He rose rapidly in his profession, and was employed to negotiate with the Austrians after Murat's defeat. The restored Bourbons retained his services, but he

supported the rising of 1820, and after its suppression was sent to Brünn in Moravia. Here he planned his "Storia del reame di Napoli" (1734-1825). In 1823 he went to Florence where he devoted himself to the study of history and to the perfection of his Italian style, and made the acquaintance of the chief literary men. Niccolini, Gino Capponi, and especially Giordani, helped him in the revision of his history. But he died before it was completed. His health, which had been undermined in prison, could not stand the strain of the hard work. Gino Capponi superintended its publication in 1834. Tacitus is Colletta's model, and he was proud of the style he had evolved. It is very characteristic, with something of the authority of a word of command, but it is not always strictly correct. Colletta had played a leading part in most of the events he describes. He does not pretend to be impartial, and he is not always strictly accurate, for he had only his memory to fall back upon for much of what he relates. Botta, for all his rhetoric, has little feeling, but Colletta is a warm partisan, who is deeply moved by the condition of his country, and his history is a telling indictment against Bourbon rule, which cannot be invalidated in its main points.

Vincenzo Cuoco (1770-1823) was banished from Naples for his share in the movements of 1799, and wrote his "Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione di Napoli," published in 1801, while in France. The work is invaluable for the period it covers. Cuoco's rare insight and keen critical sense enable him to

write with exemplary impartiality, in spite of his genuine enthusiasm for the cause for which he had been banished. Vico's influence is evident in the "Saggio," and still more in "Platone in Italia" (1804-6), a romance on the lines of the young Anacharsis, which was meant to impress Italy with her past greatness and rouse her to emulate her ancestors.

The romantic movement placed history in an entirely new light. Rhetoric disappeared before a careful examination of documents such as Muratori had instituted, and the matter came to be thought of greater importance than the manner. The Middle Ages instead of contemporary history were once more the favourite field for research, and Manzoni's belief in the paramount importance of truth, made him support the new methods both by precept and example. To this change is doubtless due the appointment of the first "Deputazione di Storia Patria," in 1839, by Charles Albert. A number of valuable documents and chronicles were published, while the "Archivio storico italiano," established by Vieusseux in 1842, is still doing excellent service in the cause of history in Italy. Among its most ardent and valuable supporters in early days was Gino Capponi (1792-1876), whose "Storia della republica fiorentina" is well known.

Cesare Cantù (1804-95), born near Como, was Manzoni's principal disciple in history. Well-founded suspicions caused the Austrian police to imprison him, and on his release he was exiled till the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy. His

literary activity throughout his long life was truly remarkable. Besides the works mentioned elsewhere he was the author of poems, of essays, and of several tales meant to educate the people. But he is best known as a historian. His greatest undertaking was the " Storia universale," which came out between 1838 and 1846, in thirty-five volumes, and was several times reprinted. Such a work was bound to be inaccurate and could not possess lasting value, but in its own day, according to D'Ancona and Bacci, it was almost popular and contributed greatly to the culture of a whole generation of Italians. Voltaire was accused of falsifying history to suit his own views, and a similar charge may be brought against Cantù. He looks at the world with the eyes of a violent clerical, and does not try to conceal the fact or to judge impartially. Nor is his pen lacking in venom. We have not the space to give a list of his many works, but " L'abate Parini e la Lombardia nel secolo passato " (1854) is probably the best and most accurate book he produced, for by temperament he was thoroughly in sympathy with Parini. His Reminiscences of Manzoni (1882), though he appears to have exaggerated his intimacy with his hero, is an important contribution to the subject, especially as revised by Manzoni's stepson, Stampa.

Other writers of this school were Carlo Troya (1784-1858), a Neapolitan refugee whose five years of wandering among the libraries of Italy resulted in the " Del Veltro Allegorico di Dante," a book of profound learning. This was followed by his great

" Storia d'Italia nel Medio Evo " (1839), which he did not carry beyond Charlemagne's death. The work is little more than a collection of annotated documents, for Troya lacked the power of arranging a history in an agreeable and artistic form. Cesare Balbo (1789-1853), the patriotic Piedmontese minister, author of the " Speranze d'Italia," declared that he should never have written his " Vita di Dante " (1839) had Dante been a mere poet and man of letters. " But Dante is a great part of the history of Italy," and to his patriotism and his political importance may be due, to some extent, the great revival of the study of Dante during the last century, a revival in which England has played a creditable part. In 1846 Balbo wrote in forty days for the " Enciclopedia popolare " his lucid and admirably arranged " Sommario della storia d'Italia," which has been reprinted again and again. Troya and Balbo were good liberals, and their writings were always contributions to the " great arsenal " for the expulsion of the foreigner which Italian literature had then become. Michele Amari of Palermo (1806-89) was also a liberal, and the tone of his great " Storia del Vespro Siciliano " (1842), a work of extraordinary learning and research, caused his exile to Paris. His " Storia dei Mussulmani di Sicilia " (1854-72) is even more important and is the recognised authority on the subject. On the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy Amari became Professor of Arabic at Pisa. He was twice Minister for Education and was made a Senator.

The throwing open of the archives to the public

by the Italian Government has stimulated history by opening vast new sources of information. But the whole tendency of the day in the peninsula is to multiply short monographs on minor points rather than to undertake really important works, and the great addition to the material available, which makes it more and more difficult to obtain a thorough knowledge of any single subject, has certainly contributed to bring about this result. The literary and artistic value of historical writing has unquestionably diminished in consequence, for these pamphlets and monographs can only be classed as material for history. But there are numerous exceptions. "Lo stato romano dall' anno 1814 fino al 1850," by Luigi Farini (1812-66), who had ample opportunities for studying most of the events he describes, is an interesting and important book. Then there is Giuseppe de Leva (1821-93), who has given us an admirable picture of an age in his "Storia di Carlo V in relazione coll' Italia." Pasquale Villari (1827), a Neapolitan liberal, now a Professor in Florence, whose work is well known in England, is the author among other things, of excellent studies on Savonarola and Machiavelli; and Guglielmo Ferrero's "Grandezza e decadenza di Roma," which began to appear in 1902, is the most original book that has appeared on the subject for many years.

We must not forget the great jurist Gian Domenico Romagnosi (1761-1835), who was imprisoned on account of his political opinions. Like the well-known economist and teacher, Melchiorre Gioia

(1767-1829), he based his theories upon those of Condillac and other eighteenth-century philosophers, but his works on law and politics and social science were of great value in their day.

Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855) of Rovereto, was the leading thinker of his time in Italy.[1] His "Nuovo saggio sull' origine delle idee" (1830), contains the germ of all his thought, and is perhaps his most important publication. He is a vigorous opponent of Locke and Condillac and their school. He was at first welcomed by Pius IX, but was dismissed when the Pope ceased to be a constitutionalist, and his "Cinque piaghe di Santa Chiesa," which Pius IX had once praised, was placed upon the Index. Rosmini was a patriot who wished to see the Church reformed. Though the Church was, in its essentials, the work of God, there was no reason, in his view, why it should not be reformed in its accidentals, which were the work of man. He regarded the worldliness of the clergy as the root of the evil. On his dismissal Rosmini withdrew to Stresa, on Lago Maggiore, where he established his order, and where he died.

The "Primato morale e civile degli Italiani" of Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-52), printed at Brussels in 1843, was the most influential of the ideal reconstructions of Italy which appeared during the period immediately preceding 1848, and which were swept away by the events of that memorable year. It produced excellent results by the enthusiasm which the great position Gioberti arrogated

[1] De Sanctis, "Letter. ital. nel. secolo XIX."

to his own country aroused among the Italians of that generation. Gioberti was imaginative, poetical, and a perfect master of the language, and the services the "Primato" rendered to the national cause were not exaggerated by Balbo when he called it "not a book, an action." Banished for his political opinions, Gioberti accepted a teaching post at Brussels, where he won a great reputation by his philosophical works, notably by his "Introduzione allo studio della filosofia" (1840). When Pius IX left Imola for the Conclave at which he was elected Pope, he brought the "Primato" with him to present to the new Pontiff. It maintained that Italy should be formed into a confederation of states, from which Austria was tacitly excluded, with the Pope at their head. Reform was to be gradual and to be accomplished by a moral regeneration of the whole people, which would then naturally look up to the Pope as its sovereign. Gioberti's eloquence made many converts, and the election of the liberal Pius IX was considered a happy omen for his views. But the Pope soon changed his policy and Gioberti took an active part in Piedmontese politics for several years, till he quarrelled with the ministry. His well-known attack upon the Jesuits, "Il Gesuita Moderno," appeared in 1847. His "Rinnovamento civile d'Italia" (1851) is a very different work from the "Primato." Gioberti fully realises that the regeneration of Italy can now only be effected through the House of Savoy and the overthrow of the temporal power. In fact, he here advocates the very policy which Cavour

afterwards carried out with such conspicuous success. Among other political theories advanced were Mazzini's idea of an Italian Republic, and various schemes for a federation of Republics, advocated by Carlo Cattaneo and Giuseppe Ferrari. But the "Primato" was the most influential of them all, and it inspired such books as Balbo's "Speranze d'Italia" (1844), though Balbo fully recognised the impracticable character of Gioberti's plan, and d'Azeglio's "Ultimi casi di Romagna."

Another distinguished patriotic thinker was Terenzio Mamiani (1799-1885) of Pesaro, who won some reputation as a poet in his younger days. In the "Inni Sacri" (1829), written in fine blank verse that suggests Monti, he endeavoured to unite the Bible with Homer and Callimachus, according to d'Ancona and Bacci, and wed Christian ideas to Greek form, while the "Idilli" (also 1829) sing of nature in its relation to human feeling. As a philosopher "he started with a methodical and critical empiricism, steering his course half-way between the Scotch school and French eclecticism, and gradually drew towards a form of Platonic idealism." "Del rinnovamento della filosofia antica italiana" (1834), was his first work. He was prominent in politics. Imprisoned and exiled to France, he became a constitutional minister under Pius IX, and opposed the proclamation of the Roman Republic. In later life he was a warm supporter of Cavour.

We do not propose to deal with the scientific prose of the last century, but something must be said

of Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), the founder of modern scientific criminology. He was born at Verona, the descendent of a long line of distinguished Jews. An essay on the greatness and decline of Rome, written when he was only twelve, actually found a publisher. He began to study Oriental languages, but soon turned his attention to medicine, and was an army surgeon for six years (1859-1865). In 1872 he was made Professor of Psychiatry at Pavia, and his inaugural lecture on genius and insanity contains all the essentials of his theory that genius is a form of pathological degeneracy, as fully developed in his "L'homme de génie" (1889). His discovery that pellagra is caused by the bad rice supplied to the work-people roused such ill-feeling against him among the landed proprietors that he gladly left Pavia for a Professorship at Turin which he held till his death. The examination of a famous criminal's skull gave rise to his theory that crime is a result of the shape of the skull and the organisation of the nervous system, —in fact, to psychical and pathological conditions, usually inherited—and to the belief that criminology should be an exact science. In his investigations he was ably assisted by Enrico Ferri. "L'uomo delinquente," in the enlarged edition of 1897, and "La donna delinquente" are perhaps the best known of his many works on the subject. Lombroso failed to attach sufficient importance to the effect of surroundings on the bacillus of crime, so to speak, and to realise that under favourable circumstances criminal impulses may be counteracted

and made helpful instead of harmful to society. In later years, however, he considerably modified his opinions. Similarly, he almost certainly carried his views as to the degeneracy of genius too far. But his work made an epoch in criminology, and as it came at a time when the tide of realism in literature was at its height, its influence can be traced in fiction, in poetry and even in criticism.

When we turn to more strictly literary prose, we find no one during the first half of the nineteenth century whose authority can rival that of Pietro Giordani (1774-1848) of Piacenza. He studied law, but an unfortunate attachment made him suddenly resolve in 1797 to become a Benedictine, as the best means of escaping from parental tyranny. He realised his mistake too late and abandoned the Order, but was not released from his vows till 1803. He held various administrative posts, including one in the library of Bologna University, where he was also supplementary Professor of Eloquence. But he disliked the work. While teaching at Cesena he delivered his well-known Panegyric on Napoleon, for which he was made " Prosegretario dell' Accademia di Belle Arti " at Bologna. It is interesting to note that the Bonapartists found the speech too cold, the liberals too fulsome in tone. Napoleon's fall, in 1815, deprived him of his post and drove him to Milan, where he became intimate with Monti and contributed for a while to the " Biblioteca italiana," his articles in which, as we have seen, brought about his friendship with Leopardi. Then his father's

death gave him a competency and he returned to Piacenza till the influence of Austria, which disliked his advocacy of every kind of useful reform, drove him out in 1824. He went to Florence, became intimate with Niccolini, Gino Capponi and their friends and helped Colletta in revising his history. But in 1830, doubtless at Austria's suggestion, he was once more obliged to move. He tried Parma, where, however, he was even imprisoned for three months by the unwilling authorities in 1834. He lived just long enough to witness the failure of the risings of 1848.

In his own day Giordani's word was law in literary circles, but his fame has considerably diminished among later generations. He himself was far from satisfied with his output. He has not produced a single work of permanent value, for he lacked the qualities necessary for completing a great undertaking. He projected important treatises, *e.g.*, "Sulla natura del prete e del principe," or " Della religione in Italia," but they remained mere projects. All his writings are short, and their value lies in their style rather than in their matter, for Giordani was before all things a stylist. He was a master of the panegyric which was then so popular. Those on Napoleon, and on Giambattista Galliadi, the artist (1811), and the unfinished panegyric on Canova (1810) were the best. But he wrote on every kind of subject. We may mention, among others, " La prima Psiche di P. Tenerani," " Ritratto di V. Monti," and " Degli asili' d'infanzia." His work is characterised by sound learning, perfect

taste and vigorous thought. His translations of Livy and of Seneca's letters are admirable, while his own letters, especially those to Leopardi, and his graceful inscriptions, bear the unmistakable stamp of distinction that marks everything he produced.

Giordani was a confirmed classicist. He fully realised that Italian prose needed purifying and reforming, and recommended, as we saw, the Greek style and the language of the Trecento as the best means for the purpose, and as a stylist, he holds a very high place. He declared that his compositions were often built round a single word. Hence he preferred " to sketch rather than to express his ideas " and " took little pleasure in long arguments." Hence, too, his delight in short treatises, in which alone it is possible to weld the thought and the words into a perfect, indissoluble whole. Nowadays his prose seems too far removed from everyday life. We find it affected and strained, and the greater his efforts to recapture the simplicity of the Trecento, the more certain was his failure, for the simplicity of a past age cannot be imitated or produced by such artificial methods ; it is a spontaneous growth.

Giordani's influence during his life was largely personal. He was generous and appreciative of others' work, and we owe him a lasting debt for his sympathy with Leopardi. An eager advocate of every reform, and a champion of the oppressed, he protested against the brutal treatment of children which prevailed at this time. He was also a brilliant conversationalist and Byron, who did not love intellectual talk, declared that he was the one

man in Europe whose conversation he had enjoyed. It is just this personal magnetism, which was Giordani's most valuable asset in the eyes of his contemporaries, that he had failed to reproduce in his writings.

Niccolò Tommaseo (1802-74) "reflects in his varied activity all the different, conflicting clashing tendencies of his day." He studied law at Padua and ultimately settled at Florence, where he eked out a precarious existence by literary work. He compiled his Dictionary of Synonyms (1830), which is now perhaps his best-known work, for Vieusseux and contributed to the "Antologia." This review had been started by Vieusseux in 1821 with the object of helping to effect the regeneration of the country by keeping alive the national spirit, and it was an article by Tommaseo which brought about its suppression in 1833 and drove its author into exile in Paris. It was revived at a later date as the "Nuova Antologia" and is now the best-known review in Italy. In Paris Tommaseo wrote "Fede e bellezza" (1838) which, though severely criticised by Manzoni and others, is a remarkable anticipation of the modern realistic novel. In the previous year, in his "Duca d'Atene," a mediæval novel, he had tried to reproduce the period by using archaic words in the dialogue, but the result did not prove very successful. He next visited Corsica, where he made a collection of the popular songs of the peasantry, and he published General Paoli's letters. In 1839 the amnesty enabled him to return to Venice, where he was imprisoned in 1848,

but liberated by the insurgents. He took a prominent part in the revolutionary Government established by Manin. On the fall of Venice he retired to Corfù, where his sight began to fail, but he went to Turin in 1854, and to Florence ten years later. He refused all rewards and honours and continued working till the end, in spite of his blindness.

There is hardly a branch of literature which Tommaseo did not attempt. His verse is interesting, if only from the fact that he was not altogether unsuccessful in reviving classical metres, and he shows keen insight into human nature. But he was by nature a critic and scholar. His knowledge of literature to the end of the eighteenth century was very extensive. He shared Foscolo's opinion that, in order to criticise an author, we must endeavour to see him in relation to the circumstances of his own time. This was the attitude he adopted towards Dante in his commentary and his other writings on the poet, which in some ways anticipate the conclusions of later scholars. But he had his prejudices. He was often unfair, even acrimonious towards contemporaries like Foscolo, Niccolini and Leopardi. His "Dizionario estetico" (1840), "Bellezza e civiltà" (1857), "Ispirazione e arte" (1858), and "Storia civile nella letteraria" (1872) are among his best performances. But they are a mere fragment of his work. He is a distinguished stylist, though his rounded periods strike one as stilted and often smell of the lamp; and he is uneven. Tommaseo had high ideals of the educational

importance of literature and he never wavered in the strong moral purpose and religious convictions upon which the honourable poverty of his life of hard work is the best comment.

The life of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) belongs to politics rather than to literature, but his work in the "Indicatore Genovese," the "Indicatore Livornese," the "Antologia," and the "Giovane Italia" was important and most influential in its day.[1] "Art for art's sake is an atheistic formula" may be taken as the key-note of his attitude towards literature. "We regard forms as secondary and perishable phenomena: the idea alone is sacred as a thing baptised to everlasting life." In fact, he judges literature from a moral, humanitarian and patriotic standpoint. To him the poet is not an idle singer of an empty day, but a thinker and a teacher. It is the mission of art to interpret the thought of the times. Hence for Mazzini Dante is the prince of poets. He classifies poets as subjective and objective, the creators and the mere mirrors of their time. Thus Æschylus, Byron (in spite of his sceptical individualism), Schiller and Dante are greater than Shakespeare or Goethe because they stamp themselves upon their age and impregnate it instead of simply reflecting it or urging men to adapt themselves to it. Nature is less than man and the poet must therefore transfigure it, not depict it. Mazzini hated individualism and considered it the mission of literature to give expression to a universal feeling of brotherhood in humanity.

[1] Bolton King's "Mazzini," c. 18.

In style, he is " lively and correct, now simple, now imaginative, with a slight touch of classicism " in his literary writings, but the mystic and prophetic element that is so prominent in his political utterances is generally absent. He was, of course, an adherent of the romantic school. His " Del dramma storico " and " Saggio sopra alcune tendenze della letteratura europea nel secolo XIX " are among the most important of his literary essays.

While the country was struggling for independence, party feeling ran too high for it to be possible to attempt to judge work upon its artistic merits. But during the last half of the nineteenth century there was a great revival of literary history and criticism. Luigi Settembrini (1813-77), a Neapolitan by birth, has left us an account of his romantic life in his delightful " Ricordanze della mia vita," which were unfortunately never finished. He was an active liberal and was condemned to death in 1851, but the sentence was commuted to one of imprisonment on the island of Sto Stefano, where he spent his time translating Lucian with nothing but a dictionary to help him. His imprisonment was much less rigid than Pellico's in the Spielberg. An attempt to rescue him, organised by Giuseppe Panizzi, the great librarian of the British Museum, failed owing to the ship being wrecked. In 1859 the Neapolitan Government sent him with a number of other prisoners to the Argentine. Settembrini's son, who had joined the ship as a cook at Gibraltar, suddenly appeared on deck in English naval uniform and frightened the captain into landing his prisoners

at Queenstown, where they were enthusiastically received. On the fall of the Bourbons Settembrini returned, and in 1862 he was made Professor of Italian literature in the University of Naples. In this capacity he delivered his "Lezioni di letteratura italiana," in which Italian literature is treated entirely as a reflection of the struggle between the Empire and the Papacy for eight centuries. The work is strongly anti-clerical in tone. It is written in Settembrini's popular, unadorned style and is thoroughly readable, but is not considered to possess much critical value.

Francesco De Sanctis, (1818-83), born at Morra Irpina in the Kingdom of Naples is unquestionably the greatest of Italian literary critics. He was imprisoned for two years at Naples for his political opinions and then deposited in Malta. He went to Turin and Zurich, supporting himself by lecturing and teaching. From 1871 to 1877 he was Professor of Comparative Literature at Naples. He was a supporter of Cavour in politics and was more than once Minister for Education. On first appointing him Cavour said he was the only Neapolitan in whose praise the deputies of the South were unanimous. De Sanctis had learnt German in prison, and he is indebted to Hegel for the leading principles of his literary criticism, but he has developed them on lines of his own. A work of art is to be judged neither by fixed canons nor by the personal idiosyncrasies of the critic. On the contrary, the critic "must study the world formed by the poet, examine it, enquire into its nature, which virtually contains

within itself its own poetics, that is, the organic laws of its formation, its own concept, its own form, its genesis and its style."[1] "As the artist reproduces nature, but with other means and for another end, so the critic reproduces art with its processes and its own ends, and, what is more important, with that full consciousness of art which the artist often lacks."[2] In short, every work of art must be considered in all its circumstances. We must endeavour to penetrate the poet's mind at the time of writing, and then decide how far he has succeeded in carrying out his idea and whether he has clothed it in a suitable form. Starting with these views, De Sanctis has left a body of criticism of unrivalled excellence of its kind which ranges over the whole of Italian literature. We may instance his studies on Petrarch (1869) and Leopardi (1885), the "Saggi critici" (1886) and "Nuovi saggi critici" (1873) and the "Storia della letteratura italiana nel secolo XIX," first published in 1898. Those who have heard him speak declare that he was even more effective as a lecturer than as a writer, and he was certainly a born teacher. His most ambitious work is his "Storia della letteratura italiana." This is not a learned manual, but a general critical history of the subject in its main features and principal writers. In spite of occasional inaccuracies and gaps, it is still the most important critical work of its kind.

But De Sanctis' æsthetic criticism was only

[1] "Storia letter. ital." I, 179.
[2] "Saggi critici," p. 310.

possible in hands as capable as his own, and his imitators soon brought his methods into disrepute. Even he was not altogether without personal prejudices, which became more marked in his followers. Nor was he always strictly accurate. He based his work rather on a careful consideration of a writer's thought than on a detailed examination of his works. Carducci, if we are not mistaken, somewhere accuses him of judging without having read. About 1860, with literature, as with history, a reaction set in in favour of a more scientific historical method and a careful sifting of the facts. Texts were restored, new documents unearthed and the libraries and archives, which were them being opened to the public, were carefully ransacked. The chief advocate of this method was Carducci, whose poet's insight and great critical power give the results of his researches a unique value. We may instance his studies of Parini's "Giorno." His many editions, and his work upon the texts of earlier writers bear witness to his untiring labour as a scholar, and his lectures and papers, which are gradually being published, will unquestionably be valuable additions to the history of the development of the national literature. With him we may class Alessandro d'Ancona (b. 1835) a Professor in the University of his native town of Pisa, whose learning and critical acumen and literary activity rival those of Carducci himself. "Le Origini del teatro in Italia" and "Poesia popolare italiana," which both belong to 1877, are perhaps his most important publications. Adolfo Bartoli of Fivizzano

(1833-94), a Professor in Florence, was the author of a great work on the first two centuries of Italian literature (1870-1880) and of a history of Italian literature which does not go beyond Petrarch's death. They are monuments of learning and have contributed greatly to the elucidation of this obscure early period. Nor must we forget the "Giornale storico della letteratura italiana" which has done so much to encourage conscientious research. We may also mention the "Storia letteraria d'Italia scritta da una Società di Professori," which is now approaching completion, and which will ultimately be the most authoritative work of its kind on the subject.

There cannot be two opinions as to the great services the historical method has rendered to literary history, but we cannot help feeling that it has been carried quite far enough. Criticism has been almost buried under erudition, and there is certainly room for a reaction in the other direction. However, it must be admitted that the historical school still holds almost undisputed possession of the field. The most important advocate of De Sanctis' æsthetic methods at present is Benedetto Croce, whose admirable articles in "La Critica" are the best criticisms upon contemporary Italian literature. He gives due weight to scholarly accuracy and to the necessity of studying every circumstance that may help us to interpret a work of art, but he rightly holds that the impression and the effect it produces on its readers really constitute its importance. Croce's following is,

however, small when compared with the host of advocates of the more orthodox methods.

The language question[1] has been well to the front throughout the nineteenth century. Antonio Cesari (1760-1828), a pious priest of Verona, probably did more for the purification of Italian style than any other man of his day. "By his writings and his example," runs his epitaph by Giordani, "he gloriously championed the Christian faith and the Italian language." Apart from this his life was quite uneventful. He held that, as the Trecento was the golden age of the language, the only hope of a revival lay in an imitation of the ideal style of that century. This was the creed he preached in a "Dissertazione sopra lo stato presente della lingua italiana," crowned by the Leghorn Academy in 1809 and in "Le Grazie" (1813). He was an enthusiastic Dante scholar, and his "Bellezze della Commedia di Dante" (1824-6), though tedious at times, remains a useful commentary on the style of the poem. The most important of his translations was his "Terence," which was highly praised by Giordani. But he is best remembered as an authority on the language, and his patriotic crusade for the expulsion of foreign words from the dictionary was almost as enthusiastic as that of the nationalists for the expulsion of foreign troops from the peninsula. He was the founder of a school of purists which lasted well into the nineteenth century. But even his supporters realised that his admiration for the Italian of the fourteenth century was excessive,

[1] V. Rossi, "Storia letter. ital.," Vol. III, c. X.

and that he shows a pedantic, almost ridiculous fondness for archaic expressions of that period. His re-issue of the Crusca dictionary with additions and corrections was, however, his most important work, and was the cause of the controversy with which his name is usually connected.

Needless to say, Padre Cesari's theories gave rise to considerable opposition. Writers, who were themselves advocates of a purer style, objected to their vocabulary being limited to the language of the Trecento. Chief of these was Monti, who published some lively dialogues in the " Poligrafo " (1813) ridiculing the mistakes in the Crusca dictionary and declining to bow to the authority of what he called the " Veronese Committees " (Giunte Veronesi). In 1816 the Crusca Academy, which had been revived by Napoleon in 1808, refused the co-operation of the " Istituto italiano di scienze, lettere ed arti," which was also to undertake a dictionary, in compiling the new edition of their well-known work. This, in conjunction with the replies to his attacks in the " Poligrafo," annoyed Monti and induced him to undertake the " Proposta di alcune correzzioni ed aggiunte al Vocabolario della Crusca." The first volume appeared in 1817, and the other six before 1826. They consist of comments on the Crusca's definitions of letters, discussions and witty ironical dialogues between words and people. Monti proved most successful as a controversial writer and has a charming prose style. He gives due weight to the Tuscan dialect, but holds that the ordinary language of cultivated

people spoken throughout Italy should be allowed to supplement it within reasonable limits. Galvani and Biamonti supported the Crusca in this controversy about what Monti called "the one bond of union between the miserable relics of the former masters of the world," while Monti was ably seconded by his son-in-law, Giulio Perticari. Perticari's "Degli scrittori del Trecento e de' loro imitatori" (1818) and "Dell' amor patrio di Dante e del suo libro intorno al Volgare Eloquio" (1820) maintain that the language of every other century has equal claims with that of the fourteenth to be regarded as the true Italian. This controversy was undoubtedly one of the many signs of the awakening of the national conscience in Italy. We have already (p. 201) dealt with Manzoni's views on the subject.

"The Italian language will become extinct," says Carducci in the Preface to "Levia Gravia," "and the Italians will still be left arguing as to whether it ever existed." Just as the union of Italy has hitherto failed to stamp out the old animosities existing between the different provinces, and more especially between North and South, so it has failed to affect the dialects of these provinces, which are spoken even by the better classes among themselves. These are so different that a Milanese could not understand a Sicilian when talking in dialect nor a Neapolitan a Genoese. What could be more instructive than the opinions on this matter given by the literary men interviewed by Ojetti in his "Alla scoperta dei letterati" (Milano, 1895)?

He found many of them talking an Italian worse than what they wrote. Matilde Serao said there could be no such thing as an Italian novel, for there were three languages spoken in Naples alone—literary Italian, the "lingua aulica," both of which are artificial, and the dialect, the only one of the three that is really alive. Of the writers interviewed, some twenty-six were pessimistic as to the future of literature, and they made the absence of a standard Italian language, instinctively spoken and written as a living, natural tongue by all educated classes, the chief reason for their despondent attitude. Only eleven were optimistic. Even d'Annunzio's style, which many at first considered to be the harbinger of a great awakening, is purely literary. Pascoli maintains that it is a genuine Italian style, not disfigured with Gallicisms, as some Milanese "who don't know how to write" (the sneer is characteristic of the state of feeling prevailing in Italy) have insisted; yet even he would like to see it strengthened by a strong infusion of dialect. These are matters upon which a foreigner cannot presume to pass judgment when no two leading authorities in the country seem to be of the same opinion. Carducci said that it is a question of style rather than of language, and we are inclined to agree with him. Manzoni's theory and practice are generally held to be the ideal, and the rhetorical artifices, and affected archaisms of former days have now quite disappeared from ordinary prose. "There is no doubt," says Vittorio Rossi, "that a type of Italian prose is being daily formed, which is frankly

modern, free from all harshness, light and capable of being adapted to all the needs of thought and to the literary treatment of science, history, politics, pedagogy, moral philosophy and criticism." If this is the case, we imagine that the gradual extension of education in the peninsula will slowly, but surely effect a practical solution even of the language question.

CHAPTER XIV

POETS, NOVELISTS AND DRAMATISTS OF TO-DAY

As it is impossible even for their own countrymen to hope to deal adequately with contemporaries, we have thought it best, in discussing Italian creative writers of to-day, merely to give a brief account of those who seem to have won for themselves a more or less assured position. In poetry, of course, Carducci dominates the field. All the leading singers look up to him as their master, however far from him they may since have wandered. And like him they are all lyric poets, for in Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, the lyric seems to be the only form of verse which still holds its own. Narrative and epic poetry have been ousted by the novel, while tragedy has retired before the drama.

Giovanni Pascoli,[1] born in the Romagna in 1855, who succeeded to Carducci's Professorship in the University of Bologna, where he was himself once a favourite pupil of the master, is the chief of the classical school, though there is much that is romantic in his work. As with Carducci, his powers developed slowly. The poems in his first volume, "Myricae," were composed between 1891 and 1900, but his "Poemetti" (1897-1904) probably show him at his best. "Canti di Castelvecchio" (1903) is his last volume. Pascoli's training was profoundly

[1] Vittorio Cian in "Nuova Antalogia," Nov. 1st, 1900.

classical, and he has twice won the Latin verse prize at Amsterdam.[1] His early life was saddened by a terrible tragedy. His father, an agent on a large estate, was murdered on the high road by unknown brigands and the family plunged in poverty, from which it took Pascoli some years to rescue it. This event and the death of several brothers and sisters inspired the " Giorno dei Morti," perhaps the best of all his poems. Pascoli is melancholy, as Virgil and Manzoni, his favourite authors, are melancholy. But he is an idealist and an optimist, an advocate of mercy and peace, with a profound sympathy for human suffering. To him suffering is the salt of life, which raises man above the brutes. He is a patriotic Italian and a socialist, and critics have deplored a tendency in some quarters to consider him as a man with a mission rather than as a poet.

Pascoli is at his best in descriptions of country life and of nature, for which he has a strong feeling. Poems like " Ai campi " and " Per Casa " show an extraordinary knowledge of farm life in Italy, and he can bring a whole scene before us in a few lines. But Romagna, the home of his youth, is the country he loves best, as is clear from the " Ricordi." He is a singer of family affection rather than of love and he has never married. " Poetry," he once declared, " lives by detail," and he has certainly put his theory into practice. His

[1] His prize poem, " Phidyle," will give a good idea of his work to those who find Latin easier to read than Italian.

work often suggests a Dutch picture. For this reason he is fragmentary, with little grasp of the world as a whole, and he tends to lose direct inspiration in the accessories. His style is exquisite and at times polished almost to excess. His strange fondness for onomatopœic words like "Virb" for the cry of the swallow shows a preference, to quote Benedetto Croce, for the material aspect of things rather than for their spirit.[1] Shelley's "Skylark" brings the bird before us in a way that Pascoli's onomatopœics could never do. A pleasing and not excessive symbolism often runs through his poems, as in "La quercia d'Hawarden" on Gladstone's death. In fact, Pascoli stands among the foremost living poets in Italy, a position to which his admirably finished miniatures of nature and of the life of the fields, from which the country still draws most of her wealth, justly entitles him, though he is in no sense a great poet.

We must not forget Olindo Guerrini (b. 1845), whose "Postuma di Lorenzo Stecchetti" appeared in 1877, with Carducci's "Odi Barbare." Their author, the librarian to Bologna University, is the champion of the realist school of poetry, and looks to France, especially to Baudelaire, for his inspiration. The "Postuma," supposed to have been the literary remains of a young man who died early of consumption, do not take very high rank as

[1] Cp. "Si dondola, dondola, dondola
senza rumore la cuna
nel mezzo al silenzio profondo."
"Il Sogno della Vergine."

poetry, and owe their success in Italy as much to the scandal to which their outspoken tone gave rise as to their intrinsic merits. Guerrini has followed the " Postuma " with " Novissime liriche d' amore di Luigi Stecchetti."

More interesting and more important is Arturo Graf,[1] the son of a German father and an Italian mother, who was born at Athens in 1848. He is a distinguished critic and scholar, as his " Foscolo, Manzoni e Leopardi," and his latest work, " L'Anglomania e l'influsso inglese in Italia nel secolo XVIII " have amply proved. He travelled widely in Europe for business purposes before accepting the Professorship in the University of Turin, which he has now held for many years. Sensitive, with his passions absolutely under the control of his intellect, he has been a pessimist almost from boyhood. His is an unrelieved melancholy " which poisons every feeling and every thought," far more hopeless in its absolute resignation than Leopardi's pessimism, for Leopardi still had the power of resistance. " In my heart is neither desire, nor remorse, nor grief, nor anger," he says in " Medusa." " I lie weary and abandoned, like a ship upon its side, beyond all human help." The sea, usually dreary and melancholy, often occurs in his poems. Even death cannot bring us peace, he declares in " Ascolta," since science proves that nothing ever dies. " When thou art buried, dost thou hope for eternal rest ? O thou fool, thou fool ! Harken to my words. This slavery ends not. Thou shalt not die, thou shalt

[1] See G. A. Cesareo in " Nuov. Ant.," Feb. 1st, 1900.

not die, neither shalt thou rest, either little or much."[1] Man must go on forever, passing from life to life.

In "Medusa," his first volume, he seeks and apparently finds comfort in contemplating the petrifying Gorgon. Later volumes are "Dopo il tramonto" (1893), "Le Danaidi" (1893), "Poemetti drammatici" (1908), and "Rime della selva" (1906). Graf's form is admirable and he has a wonderfully rich vocabulary. His sympathy with suffering has made him a socialist, but his socialism is said to be purely academic.

Mario Rapisardi[2] (b. 1844), of Catania, has a large following in his native island of Sicily, and won the admiration of Victor Hugo, Garibaldi and Cesare Lombroso. But, in spite of their extraordinary facility and vitality, it is difficult to take his epics ("Palingenesi," "Lucifero," "Giobbe," etc.) very seriously. Most men, except perhaps loyal Sicilians, will side with Carducci in the violent controversy which arose between these two pugnacious champions after Rapisardi's attack in "Lucifero." In this strange poem of twenty cantos Lucifer goes off to tell Prometheus of his plan to hurl God from heaven, for Rapisardi was eminently serious in his anti-religious purpose. Descriptions of the Mont Cenis tunnel, of Pius IX's death-bed and of Lucifer's amusing flirtation

[1] "Questo servaggio non finisce mai.
Non morrai, non morrai, ne poserai
poco ne molto."
Notice the melancholy effect of the recurring "ai."

[2] J. Dornis, "La poésie italienne contemporaine."

with Hebe and other incongruous incidents are introduced. "Giobbe" has been warmly praised.

Ada Negri, a poor schoolmistress in the Milanese district, of humble origin, attracted considerable attention with her two first volumes of poems. "Fatalità" (1893) and "Tempesta" (1896). She champions her own class against the "cruel" aristocrat and the hated "fat" bourgeois. She is too warm a partisan, however, to be fair to the middle classes, and she over-idealises her own. But she has a true feeling for the dignity of labour. The "Madre Operaia" shows us a poor woman who ruins her health in working to pay for her son's education. In the "Popolana" her respect for her own class makes itself felt, while her passionate love of children comes out in "Birchino di Strada." It is the colour, vigour and passion of her work that gives it its value, for she is careless about the form. Who can resist the appeal in "Disoccupato" or "I Grandi," "the hungry, the downtrodden, the men to be respected, who have received neither rest nor pardon from their impious foe, Nature, and yet have not hated; who have seen the corn ripen for others and yet have not robbed"?[1] "Tempesta" expresses her grief at the departure of her lover for America just when she had obtained her independence. Since then she has married a rich

[1] "Gli affanati, gli oppressi, i venerandi
che tregua ne perdono
ebber da la natura empia e nemica
e pur non hanno odiato;
che per altri fiorire vider la spica
e non hanno rubato."

Milanese manufacturer, and her last volume, "Maternità," though not without references to her former life and associations, has none of the fire of her early work. With her we may mention Annie Vivanti, to whose "Liriche" (1890) Carducci stood godfather. She is probably better known outside Italy by her English novel of last year. Vittoria Aganoor, daughter of a Venetian mother and an Armenian father, "formerly a pupil of the Abate Zanella, whose classical elegance and spontaneity is obviously reflected in her poems," is by some considered the first of living Italian poetesses. There is strong feeling in her work, and she is a better artist than Ada Negri. "Leggenda Eterna" (1900) was her first volume.

We have left Gabriele d'Annunzio[1] to the end in order to be able to deal with his work as poet, novelist and playwright together. No modern writer has given rise to more violent hatred among his opponents or to more enthusiastic admiration among his friends. Whatever one's own feelings may be as to the nature of the influence he has exercised, it is absurd to attempt to ignore the fact that he is the most potent force that has arisen in Italian literature in recent years; indeed, it is proved by the very bitterness of his enemies. Gabriele d'Annunzio was born at Pescara in the Abruzzi in 1864. It was when returning from school on a holiday that he bought the "Odi Barbare"

[1] G. A. Borgese, "Gabriele d'Annunzio," Napoli, 1909; Albertazzi, "Il Romanzo," II, 6; M. de Vogüé, "La Renaissance Latine," in "Revue des Deux Mondes," Jan., 1895.

and the " Postuma di Lorenzo Stecchetti," then just published, at Bologna. The two books were a revelation to him, and he was seized with a kind of poetic frenzy. " Suddenly the fighting fire of thy spirit descended upon my unwarlike boyhood," [1] he declares of Carducci in the " Salute al maestro," towards the end of the " Laus Vitæ." The result was a slender volume of verse " Primo Vere " (1879), which was highly praised by a critic so distinguished as Chiarini ; and, though obviously immature, it contains the germ of all d'Annunzio's later work. The perfection of the form attests Carducci's influence, while poems like " Ora Satanica " have all Stecchetti's sensuality, for d'Annunzio's paganism, unlike Carducci's, shows itself in revolt against moral restraint.

Chiarini expressed a hope that these naturalistic poems were merely youthful indiscretions. But " Canti Nuovi " (1882), published when d'Annunzio was at the University in Rome, and still more the " Intermezzo di Rimè " soon undeceived his readers and roused the indignation of many of his former admirers, including Chiarini. Poems such as " Pamphila " show that he had drunk the cup of love to the dregs and had not found the satisfaction he had sought, for the senses can only be exhausted, not satisfied. The hostile criticisms thus aroused drew from him the remark that at least the form was

[1] " Versò d'improvviso
il fuoco pugnace de' tuoi
spirti su la mai puerizia
imbelle."

faultless, and this was admitted on all sides, for d'Annunzio is above all things an artist. " A perfect verse is absolute, unchangeable, immortal," he declares in " Il Piacere." The workmanship is even more perfect in " L'Isotteo " (1890). The " Trionfo d'Isaotta," in the manner of Lorenzo de' Medici, has a grace, a lightness and an energy which it would be difficult to surpass, and so, in a lesser degree, has " L'invito alla caccia." The " Poema paradisiaco " and the " Odi Navali " both appeared in 1893. The latter give full expression to d'Annunzio's passion for the sea, and in them we find the first signs of the influence of Imperialism and of Nietzsche's Doctrine of the " Superman." In 1901 the first part of the " Canzone di Garibaldi " was printed.

Between 1903 and 1904 were published the " Laudi del Cielo, del Mare, della Terra e degli Eroi," and the " Laus Vitæ," which opens the series, is generally regarded as d'Annunzio's finest achievement in poetry. It pulsates with life and energy. The account of the gifts of Dionysus and Aphrodite, of the meeting with Ulysses, of the visit to Ithaca, and the journey on to Olympia carry one away irresistibly. There are comparatively few of the characteristics that disgust many of his readers, but d'Annunzio's ruthless cruelty comes out in the songs of the conquerors and the conquered. Then the tone changes as we approach the melancholy side of life and the misery of the " terrible cities." The metre becomes heavy and spondaic, depressing to a degree. We begin to realise the abyss of misery

into which d'Annunzio must have sunk in his day, for all his philosophy of enjoyment, and to appreciate the meaning of his prayer to Zeus at Olympia to give him a sign because of the monsters and base desires that beset him. "It will avail thee nought on earth," comes the answer, "to combat and overthrow the monsters if thou canst not transform them, O Aedo, into divine children." But a message of hope comes to him and the poem closes in triumph with a fine tribute to Carducci and an "Encomio dell' opera." "Once again have I changed you," he tells the words of the language, "into human substance, into living matter, into flesh of my flesh, into veins of blood and tears."[1] The irregular metre is absolutely under d'Annunzio's control, and there is no effect he fails to produce with it during the eight thousand and more lines. The poem was greatly enlarged on revision. It is often uneven, but it loses little in effect by the irregularity of the plan.

D'Annunzio is essentially a poet, and a lyric poet, and his poems are undoubtedly his best work. With him beauty comes before all things. "He had succeeded in effecting within himself the closest union between art and life and in finding a lasting source of harmonies in the depths of his being," he says of Stelio Éffrena in "Il Fuoco," and this has been his own aim. His purpose is

[1] "Converse io v'ho novamente
in sostanza umana, in viva
polpa, in carne della mia carne,
in vene di saugue e di pianto."

almost entirely æsthetic. His desire is to set beauty before us rather than to describe life. By beauty he means sensual beauty, for depth of feeling or of thought is beyond his reach. Albertazzi describes him as a poet " in whom all the senses have an extraordinary activity and susceptibility, dominating the mind with their desires. They receive countless impressions from the outside world and are forever searching for pleasant impressions, *i.e.*, for enjoyment." Enjoyment thus becomes the end of art and of life—" morire o gioïre," as he says in the " Laus Vitæ "—and his poems are almost all analyses of sensual passion in beautiful verse. Such is his love for verse that he tries to make it produce the effect of the other arts, of music, for instance. But his efforts to introduce a " leit-motif " are often wearisome ; and the tendency to over-elaborate the form in striving after new effects grows more and more pronounced as time goes on.

It is by his novels, however, that d'Annunzio is best known outside Italy, and though they are inferior to his poems, they give us in many ways a better opportunity of judging the man and his purpose. He has told us his reasons for writing them in the dedication of " Il Trionfo della Morte." He had often talked with friends "of an ideal modern book in prose, as varied in sound and rhythm as a poem, which in style should combine the most diverse excellences of written language and harmonise every variety of knowledge and every variety of mystery ; in which scientific exactness should alternate with a dream-like

charm and which should seem not to imitate, but to *continue* life ; a book free from the shackles of a plot, containing within itself, developed by every means known to literary art, the individual life, sensual, sentimental and intellectual, of a human being placed in the midst of the life of the universe." His novels, then, are to be untrammelled by a plot, and to contain " only one dramatis persona." They are, in fact, to be æsthetic novels, stories of a soul such as Leopardi planned and Obermann executed. But the sensations and impressions of the lyrical novelist are transitory, and it is almost impossible to maintain the interest through a whole volume, for psychology is not enough to hold them together and psychological analysis is the foundation of his method.

" Terra Vergine " (1883), written under the influence of Capuana, Verga and the realists, was his first prose work. But " Il Piacere " (1889) was the first of his characteristic novels, and the pattern of all that were to follow. The hero, Andrea Sperelli, is, as usual, a sensualist, an egoist, " a man whose will power was utterly weak." " My law is one word, nunc," he declares. There is practically no action. The book consists of an elaborate analysis of states of mind and feeling through a series of amatory intrigues, which are unredeemed by any passion that is not purely sensual. D'Annunzio's " heroes " are all of one pattern, unnatural beings, physically and morally degenerate, for whom one can feel no sympathy. Tullio Hemil in " L'Innocente " (1892) who avenges

his honour by murdering his wife's child by another man; Giorgio Aurispa, of "Trionfo della Morte" (1894), who jumps over a cliff with the woman he loves, in a fit of madness, because he is not sure of being able to win her absolute devotion—they are all of one pattern. Even Giovanni Episcopo, in the novel of that name, which is one of d'Annunzio's most powerful books, and which, as having been written just after his return from his military service, shows his nearest approach to objective writing, is very little different from the others. Nietzsche's doctrine of the Superman, which is mentioned in the introduction to "Trionfo della Morte" and which would appeal powerfully to one of d'Annunzio's temperament, becomes prominent in "Le Vergini delle Rocce" (1896), where Claudio Cantelmo, the last survivor of an old family, dreams of becoming the father of a son who shall rule in Rome. In "Il Fuoco" (1898), which had a great "success of scandal," Stelio Éffrena speaks of himself and his dreams with a seriousness that at times sounds hardly sane. Someone has applied to it Claudio Cantelmo's words, "and nothing could equal in desolation the contrast between the miserable reality and the pompous phantoms of her insane imagination," so utterly unequal is Stelio Éffrena to the reform of the drama he proposes to carry out. "Fuoco" marks the beginning of a decline which has become more pronounced with d'Annunzio's later novels such as "Forse che si, forse che non" (1910).

Needless to say the common people are excluded

from d'Annunzio's world. His characters are all superior beings, while his women are considered only from the sensual point of view. Self-sacrifice is inconceivable to d'Annunzio. "I was conscious of being not merely a chosen spirit, but a rare spirit," says Tullio Hemil; "and I believed that the rare quality of my sensations and feelings ennobled, distinguished any action of mine. . . I could not conceive of a sacrifice, of a denial of myself, just as I did not know how to renounce an expression, a manifestation of my desires." In "Fuoco," "Pleasure is the surest means of knowledge offered us by nature, and the man who has suffered much knows less than the man who has enjoyed much." This is d'Annunzio's gospel.

His culture is not profound, but he has culled the flower of most modern civilisations. With Italian literature, more especially with the early poets, he is well acquainted, and he is familiar with the chief moderns in Europe—Flaubert, de Maupassant, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Dostoieffski, Oscar Wilde and Nietzsche. He is no creator and most of his characters and situations can be traced to one or other of these writers. But he makes what he borrows so completely his own that he cannot be accused of mere plagiarism.

D'Annunzio, however, has another object. In the introduction to the "Trionfo della Morte," already quoted, he tells us that his chief aim is to "produce a work of beauty and of poetry, a plastic and euphonious prose, rich in images and in music; to aid effectually in establishing in Italy a

modern narrative and descriptive prose—that is my most enduring ambition." It is to be able to "fix upon paper with graphic truth the slightest fugitive wave of feeling, of thought, or even of unsubstantial dreams." Yet its music must "rival the great Wagnerian orchestra (D'Annunzio, for all his Latin hatred of the barbarian North, was a great admirer of Wagner) in suggesting what "music alone can suggest to the modern mind." Though it can hardly be said that d'Annunzio's, or indeed any style, has achieved this feat, yet even his most violent opponents admit the excellence of his prose, with its varied cadences and rich harmonies. The descriptions of Rome in "Il Piacere," which suggest the sadness and charm of its antiquity as successfully as the poems themselves, or of Venice in "Il Fuoco," or of the garden or the song of the nightingale in "Vergini delle Rocce" are masterpieces in their way. He has a wonderful vocabulary and he admits his debt to de Amicis for having taught him how to read the dictionary. Unlike Carducci, he is not obliged to wrestle with his matter before he can subdue it to his will. The art is so smooth, so perfect as to become monotonous, for it is varied by no inequality. There is no touch of humour, no relaxing of the tension for commonplace subjects. Everything is decked in the same glorious robes. In each new work the style has grown more refined till it has degenerated into a mannerism. In "Fuoco," despite the fine descriptions, it is irritating, almost ridiculous at times. Nothing is spontaneous. Panzacchi says

that d'Annunzio represents " the invasion of life by art." He is " the man who, born of art, returns to art." " He only examines, touches, analyses, classifies, discusses. Nature always escapes him," because he only contemplates her as reflected in art. His descriptions and his similes almost invariably contain a reference to some well-known picture or other work of art. He is freshest and most natural in his descriptions of the sea, for which his love is genuine.

" Che necessario è navigare,
vivere non è necessario,"

are the concluding lines of " Laus Vitæ," and the account of his climbing on board the fishing-boat in " Fuoco " comes like a fresh breeze into a hot-house. But apart from this, Croce is right in calling him a dilettante. Seperelli in " Piacere " is a dilettante to the bone. So are his other heroes. There is none of the inevitableness in d'Annunzio's work that characterises the really great writers. He altogether fails to " produce an ample and harmonious representation of life."

D'Annunzio is at his worst as a dramatist. His subjective methods are quite unsuited to the stage. It is interesting to note that he began as a poet, then turned to the novel, and lastly to the drama. " Città Morta " (1898) and " La Gioconda " (1899), though their beauty is undeniable, are utterly without action. D'Annunzio has often been said to belong to the Renaissance in his sympathies, in his paganism and his hedonism, and in " Francesca da Rimini " (1902) he reproduced the period

admirably to eye and ear; but here again there is no action. "Figlio di Jorio" (1904) is his one successful play. The plot is effective and the verse beautiful, but Borgese declares that this "wonderful story" "is the most beautiful description of humanity ever written by one who is only on nodding terms with it, who knows it only by sight." "La fiaccola sotto il moggio" (1905) is little more than a repetition of his success of the previous year. Both "La Nave" (1908) and "Fedra" (1909) were failures. The characters, says Borgese, "are translations of statuesque attitudes into life." Neither in his plays nor in his novels could we imagine them possessing an objective existence outside their creator's brain. D'Annunzio is a master of literature rather than of life. He studies only himself, not the world. Borgese regards him as the representative of an inferior generation when thought, conscience and ideals were at a low ebb in Italy after the accomplishment of national unity. He is the product of the brutal, materialistic age in which he lives; but he is too great an artist to be satisfied with it as it is, for he knows that the ideal soars above these things.

It may be as well to say a word about the drama in Italy before proceeding to the more important question of the novel.[1] Giuseppe Giacosa (1847-1906) has been the most popular dramatist of his time, and deservedly so. He began with idyllic comedies of the Middle Ages, "Una partita a

[1] Jean Dornis, "Le théâtre italien contemporain." Luisa Grapollo, "Autori italiani d'oggi."

scacchi" (1881), which made his name, and "Il trionfo d'amore," both in verse. After trying historical plays, in which Felice Cavallotti (1842-98), "the last of the romantics" as Carducci called him, who was killed in a duel, also obtained considerable success, he turned to modern comedy. "Tristi amori" and "Come le foglie" were his best plays in this style. Though careless in construction, they are lively and witty, and he is a good delineator of character. He had high ideals of morality and art. Gerolamo Rovetta (b. 1853), the novelist, is a good master of technique, develops a plot rapidly and spontaneously and draws directly from life. "Le duc coscienze" has been the most popular of his many plays. E. A. Butti (b. 1868), an idealist, is a good master of stage-craft, and has attracted considerable attention with "La corsa al piacere" and "Lucifero." The brothers Camillo and Giannino Antona-Traversi are also prolific and successful dramatists.

We will now turn to the novelists.[1] The naturalistic school has its centre in Milan, but in Italy it is bound to be regional owing to the differences of character and dialect existing in the various provinces. Its founders were, in fact, both Sicilians. Luigi Capuana was born in 1839, but "Giacinta," the first Italian realistic novel, did not appear till 1879. Since then Capuana has given imagination its due place in his work, as in the

[1] Albertazzi, "Il romanzo," II, 6; Luisa Grapollo, "Autori italiani d'oggi" (Torino, 1901); J. Dornis, "Le roman italien contemporain."

" Marchese di Roccaverdina," his best novel and a typically Sicilian story, and in " Il Profumo." But the greatest of the school is certainly Giovanni Verga (b. 1840), who is best known out of Italy by his admirable short story, " Cavalleria Rusticana," upon which he based the libretto for the opera. Yet this is only one among many such stories, almost perfect of their kind and often suggesting de Maupassant, such as " Malpelo " in the " Vita dei Campi," or " La Lupa." Born towards the end of the Romantic movement, Verga began as a romanticist. " Eva " and " Tigre Reale " are thoroughly sensational and he has more than once returned to his earlier manner, as in the touching "Storia di una capinera." But "I Malavoglia" (1881) is a masterpiece of realism and there is probably no better example of the objective method applied to fiction outside Zola. It is " the sincere and dispassionate study," says Verga in the Preface, " of how, in all probability, the first disturbing desire for comfort would spring up and develop in the humblest classes." The head of a family of fishermen buys a cargo of lupins on credit to sell at a distant port, but the boat, with his eldest son in charge, is lost in a storm, and they sell the house, though not legally obliged to do so, to pay the debt to the village money-lender. The novel is concerned with the efforts of the family to buy back the house.

Verga has known these fisher-folk from childhood, and in the course of the tale we are introduced to all the members of the family and their stories, and to nearly all the people of the village, with

their picturesque, self-respecting independence and their fatalistic view of life, summed up in phrases like " It is destiny." The cholera outbreak, the pitch-tax and the burning questions of the hour in the village could not be better described. The dialogue is abrupt, almost monosyllabic, for these peasants have few words. Only occasionally does Verga lift the mask of realism and show his own feelings, and then we get such fine scenes as the struggle of the old man and his grandson with the sea, or the death of Mariuzza, so touching in its simplicity. Yet the book is tedious and it was never popular, though its merits were at once recognised. There is little to connect the various episodes. Albertazzi declares it is not Italian ; the tension of style and condensed dialogue make it too harsh and rough. It fails to hold one like the best of the short stories, where the objective method seems more in place. As Verga himself says, realism is only a method, and the book is a combination of truth and fiction, like any other, and of no more scientific value than a novel by Scott ; and its excellence is probably due quite as much to Verga's love of the subject as to his method. " I Malavoglia " was to have been the first in a series, " I Vinti," dealing with those who have been beaten in the struggle to rise in all classes of society. " Maestro Don Gesualdo," the only other written, has merits, but it is far inferior to " I Malavoglia," and Verga's heart is obviously not in the subject to the same extent.

Another distinguished realist is Federico De Roberto (b. 1861), also a Sicilian, whose " I Vicerè "

is the story, during the transition period, of an old Sicilian aristocratic family, the Uzzeda, brought up with the old feudal ideas, and ready to sacrifice everything to the glory of the house. Garibaldi's expedition in 1860 finally converts the young son and heir to the new constitutional ideas. The book is an admirable picture of the life it describes, and has been highly praised in Italy, but it seems to be quite unknown in England.

Contemporary Naples has found a voice in Matilde Serao (b. 1856), the daughter of an Italian journalist and a Greek lady. Her early life as a telegraph clerk is described in "Telegrafista dello Stato." But her literary gifts developed very rapidly, and editors were competing for her work while she was still a young girl. This easy rise to fame was not an unmixed blessing, for it encouraged instead of checking her naturally exuberant facility. Indeed, she is in many ways rather an impressionist journalist than a novelist, for her powers of observation and description are much greater than her imagination, and she has a tendency to sentimentality. "Il paese di Cuccagna" (1891), in which Zola is obviously her model, is generally considered her best work. It is a bitter attack upon the State Lottery, which she regards as the curse of modern Naples. It traces the effect of the gambling craze upon all classes, but the mathematical precision with which everyone who plays is utterly undone by the end of the volume is not quite convincing. The book is rather a series of brilliant pictures than a connected story.

What could be better than the opening scene of the christening feast for the confectioner Fragalà's daughter, or the splendid description of the melting of the blood of San Gennaro? In fact, the canvass is far too vast for the interest to be sustained throughout, and characters like the Assistito, the man who is supposed to possess the gift of foretelling the lucky numbers, or the confectioner and his family, or Carmela and Filomena, appeal to us far more than their social betters. This is usually the case with Matilde Serao, who is thoroughly at home when describing the life of the people in Naples. And for this reason books like "Il ventre di Napoli" (1884), or her admirable short stories such as "All'erta sentinella," which deal with this life, seem to us to contain her best work. "Fantasia" (1883) is usually ranked above her other novels, but it lacks the freshness and originality of her pictures of the lower classes. Matilde Serao is much in demand as a descriptive writer for the papers. "Il paese di Gesù," an account of a trip to the Holy Land, has been very popular.

With Matilde Serao we must class Grazia Deledda, who has done more to make her native Sardinia, and especially the little town of Nuoro, known to the outer world than any previous writer. The brigandage and primitive violence of the island remind one of Sicily or of Prosper Merimée's Corsica. Such novels as "Cenere" (1903) and "Il vecchio della montagna" have won her a deservedly high place among modern Italian writers for her imagination and her descriptive powers, and

" Il nostro padrone " (1910) shows no signs of deterioration.

Gerolamo Rovetta is the most popular among what Albertazzi calls the bourgeois novelists of everyday life. " Mater Dolorosa " (1889) was his first important work and is often considered to be his best, but a mother's sacrifice of everything, even of her good name with the one man she loved, for a worthless daughter is not a very attractive subject. The daughter is admirably drawn. " La Signorina " (1900) has great charm, but to our mind " Sott' Acqua " (1883), with its realistic picture of the penniless provincial nobility and its cheerful optimism is Rovetta's most successful novel. His method is dramatic and he often builds a story round a powerful scene. He is the best exponent of modern Italian life as a whole, and the main political and social questions of the day find due place in his work. He uses the ordinary language of the middle classes and has no pretensions to a literary style. Anton Giulio Barrili (1836) is a prolific writer of the same kind, whose " Come un sogno " is his best work.

Edmondo de Amicis (1846-1908) was probably the most popular writer in Italy during the last half-century. The success of his " Bozzetti della vita militare " (1869) induced him to give up the army for literature as a profession, and he is the author of a number of volumes. His children's tale, " Cuore," has had an enormous sale. He has little creative power and his plots are very slight, while he has a weakness for the kind of sentimental

optimism which finds so little favour with us Anglo-Saxons. His minor characters are usually his best. His descriptions are almost photographic in their accuracy, but they are vivid. He has published numerous books of travel, such as "La Spagna," "Il Marocco," "Ricordi di Londra" (1880), which are little more than impressionistic journalism and have earned him the nickname of a literary commercial traveller. But they are humorous, even touching at times, and are good of their kind. In later life de Amicis became a socialist, and his views on social questions find expression in "Il romanzo di un maestro" (1890) and "L'Oceano" (1899). "La carrozza di tutti" is a series of charming sketches of life in Turin as seen from a tram. De Amicis is an ardent Manzonian by conviction as well as by inclination and avowed his faith in "L'idioma gentile" (1905). From Manzoni he derives his natural, simple, unaffected style, which is highly praised.

Antonio Fogazzaro[1] (1842-1911) is unquestionably the greatest Italian novelist of his generation. He was born at Vicenza and well educated by a highly cultivated father, who was, however, rather alarmed by the boy's passionate love of music. His up-bringing was strictly religious, and Zanella was his private tutor. But he soon came under the influence of Victor Hugo, Heine and Chateaubriand, and for some years his faith was unsettled by modern scientific thought

[1] Molmenti, "Antonio Fogazzaro, la sua vita e le sue opere"; Albertazzi, "Il romanzo," II, 6.

and the doctrine of evolution. He owes more to Rosmini than to any other thinker. By temperament he is a mystic and a poet. He began his career with "Miranda" (1874), a romantic tale in verse which describes how a young girl is abandoned by her lover and dies; but it is obvious that he had not yet emerged from the imitative stage. In "Valsolda" (1876) Fogazzaro shows himself to be one of the few Italians who look at Nature like a Northerner, spiritualise it and see in it a reflection of the human heart and of human passions. But the writer's indifference to form makes these volumes not so much poetry as the material for poetry; and it is not as a poet that he will be longest remembered.

He is said to have drawn himself as Corrado Silla, the hero of "Malombra," "a mind not logical, but mystical in tendency—an ardent spiritualist—obeying a philosophical idea." His idealism and high sense of duty govern all his work. His aim, says Albertazzi, is to set before us through the novel—for no other form would be adequate for the task—"the struggles and passions by means of which the spirit rises to the ideal and to God. And science as well as faith help him towards his goal of Christian morality." Manzoni's idealism had led him to exclude love almost entirely from the "Promessi Sposi," but Fogazzaro has made it the principal means for effecting his object. His first novel, "Malombra," belongs to 1881, the year of "I Malavoglia." In spite of its mysticism, its spiritualism, and the melodramatic insanity that

are so prominent, its merits were at once recognised. Fogazzaro was a great lover of Dickens, with whose humour his own has often been compared, and we doubt whether this characteristic appears to more advantage in any of his works than in the old German secretary, Steinegge. As always with Foggazzaro, the love-story is one of renunciation. Steinegge's daughter, Edith, renounces her love for Silla to remain with her father. Silla's murder by the insane Marina is an effective, if theatrical scene.

The doctrine of renunciation is carried to its furthest lengths in " Daniele Cortis " (1885), where Elena gives up Daniele to follow a worthless husband to America. The " Mistero del poeta " (1888), Fogazzaro's poorest work, is a variation upon the same theme which also dominates " Piccolo mondo moderno " (1901). This insistence on the idea of renunciation in love has been severely criticised in some quarters. Most readers will find Fogazzaro's leading characters unsatisfactory. They are lacking in life and are sacrificed to the author's ideals. They exist only to be converted and made perfect by self-sacrifice. " Il Santo " (1906) at last brought Fogazzaro the recognition he deserved outside Italy by being placed upon the Index by the Vatican authorities. Piero Maironi, like Daniele Cortis, is an idealist, and these books prove conclusively that the direction of the modern world cannot be altered by men of this pattern, whatever else they may prove, as Fogazzaro was well aware. Yet neither Cortis nor Maironi are shaken in their

belief in their ideals, and we may feel confident that they embodied Fogazzaro's own opinions. He submitted to the Church as a matter of discipline, and in " Leila " (1910), his last novel, his modernist views are less pronounced. The unity and authority of the Church were, in his view, of greater importance than any individual opinion. The distinguished critic, Benedetto Croce, regards his neo-Catholicism as something so unpractical as to be little more than a pose, and regrets that Fogazzaro has allowed it to interfere with his art. He draws a picture of Claudio Cantelmo, the would-be father of a King of Rome, mounted on an Arab steed and Maironi upon an ass riding together in friendly converse like two Roman augurs.

All Fogazzaro's best qualities, however, find full scope in " Piccolo mondo antico " (1895), which seems to us by far the most successful of his novels, though others prefer " Cortis " as the highest expression of his idealism. It was the book he had longed to write. The scene is laid in Valsolda, on the Lake of Lugano, where was his own home. The hero, Franco Maironi, is his father ; and the priest, Zio Piero, his uncle, while most of the other characters, many of them delightfully humorous, are obviously drawn from life. The action takes place between 1852-9, the years of preparation before the expulsion of the Austrians, which coincided with the most impressionable period of his own boyhood, and he has caught once and for all the spirit of the times. Such scenes as Luisa's journey through the storm, says Molmenti, the drowning of the child in

the lake, Franco's journey by night, the meeting between Franco and Luisa over the child's dead body, and the searching of Franco's house are the noblest pages which the Italian novel can boast since Manzoni. Even Croce, who regards the book to some extent as a variation on the theme of the "Promessi Sposi," says that the mingling of high and low, pathetic and comic is here completely successful. The real and the ideal are blended in due proportion, and the principal characters, Franco and Luisa, dominate the author's purpose instead of being dominated by it. The psychology does not interfere with the story, but is naturally developed in its course instead of being analysed by the author. Franco is the idealist and the dreamer, Luisa the practical woman, whose faith, as is usual with Fogazzaro's heroines, is weaker than her husband's. It is through her that he is roused to action for his country, but it is he who proves the stronger after the death of Ombretta Pipi. The reaction of the two characters upon each other is admirably brought out.

It has been said that Fogazzaro's principal characters live alone in the "piano nobile," the first floor which is always given to the head of the house in an Italian palace, while the rest of the "dramatis personæ" are relegated to the other floors; and it is true that great and small are not blended into a single world, as in the work of the greatest writers. The minor characters rarely intrude upon the lofty moral plane reserved for the hero and heroine, but they are nevertheless far more alive and real.

What could be more true to nature than the opening of " Daniele Cortis " or of " Piccolo mondo moderno" and the all-absorbing question of the egg, or than the municipal councillors in the same book, or the endless variety of priests that are scattered through these novels ? In " Piccolo mondo antico " alone do the hero and heroine seem to us as real as the other people in the story.

Fogazzaro was the author of numerous papers dealing with religion and philosophy. His short stories in " Racconti brevi " and " Fedele " are perhaps more perfect artistically than his novels, but it is as a novelist that he will stand or fall. He was a slow writer, as we see by the long intervals between his books. But in his prose, as in his verse, he pays little attention to form, which he regards as much less important than content, and his style is generally condemned. Like most modern writers he holds, against Manzoni, that people in books should be made to speak the language that they would actually use in everyday life and his characters generally talk in their own dialects. He does not even avoid provincialisms in the other parts of his work. But he is no slave of one method, and he has been called " the most poetical of metaphysicians, the most realistic of romanticists, and the most human of mystics." Morally and spiritually his influence has undoubtedly been one of the most healthy and beneficial upon the present generation as an offset to the prevailing materialism. His novels, says Albertazzi, " leave us more inclined to forgiveness and to pity for human weakness,

more ready with sympathy, more open to the influence of every great and noble idea." And the fact that we can close this book with such a writer makes us look forward with confidence to the future of literature in Italy.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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For the eighteenth century, we have Tullio Concari's "Il Settecento" in the important "Storia letteraria d'Italia scritta da una società di Professori." which is being published by Dr. Francesco Vallardi in Milan, and Marcus Landau's "Geschichte der italienischen Litteratur im achtzehnten Jahrhundert" (Berlin, 1899). Vernon Lee's brilliant "Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy" (London, 1880), is now a recognised text-book on the subject in Italy.

For the nineteenth century, Guido Mazzoni's "L'Ottocento," in the "Storia letteraria d'Italia," will, when completed, be the principal authority. Giacomo Zanella's "Storia della letteratura italiana dalla metà del settecento ai giorni nostri" (Milano, 1880), is useful. Benedetto Croce's excellent articles in "La Critica" are generally considered the best upon contemporary writers.

If the "Storia letteraria d'Italia" deals with the subject horizontally, so to speak, the "Storia dei generi letterarii italiani," which comes from the same publisher, may be said to treat it perpendicularly; and among the volumes that have hitherto appeared "Il Romanzo," by Adolfo Albertazzi, and "La Tragedia," by Emilio Bertana, fully maintain the high standard of the "Storia letteraria."

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D'Ancona and Bacci's "Manuale della letteratura italiana" (6 vols., Firenze, 1908), with its valuable biographical notices and exhaustive bibliographies, is indispensable for any serious student of the subject and has superseded all other books of selections. Fortunately, England can at last boast of a volume of selections of its own in Mr. St. John Lucas' well-chosen "Oxford Book of Italian Verse" ("Clarendon Press," 1910), which is to be cordially recommended.

INDEX

Figures printed in HEAVIER TYPE indicate principal references. In a few cases the more important references have been grouped together before the others.

ADDISON, Joseph, 81, 82, 93
Æschylus, 135, 308
Affò, 51
Aganoor, Vittoria, 325
Akenside, Mark, 93, 94
Albergati, Francesco, 72
Alcamo, Ciullo d', 121
Aleardi, Aleardo, 270, 274
Alfieri, Vittorio, 53, 93, 97, **123-141,** 142; 31, 143, 147, 158, 159, 161, 162, 190, 192, 210, 248, 273, 286
Algarotti, Francesco, 15, 39, **74-76,** 77, 92
Alighieri, Dante, 15, 31, 73, 74, 76-79, 85, 88, 98, 117, 127, 150, 154, 156, 161, 172, 212, 229, 259, 286, 297, 307, 308, 314
Amari, Michele, 297
Amicis, Edmondo de, 333, **341-2**
Ancona, Alessandro d', 312
Annunzio, Gabriele, d' 285, 288, 317, **325-335**
" Antologia," 218, 306
Antona-Traversi, Camillo and Giannino, 336
" Archivio storico italiano," 295
Arici, Cesare, 169, 174
Ariosto, Lodovico, 5, 55, 73, 99, 127, 241, 244
Aristotle, 9, 73, 74, 177
Azeglio, Massimo Taparelli d', 243-6, 301

BACON, Francis, 35, 93
Balbo, Cesare, 249, 250, **297,** 300, 301
Balestrieri, 99, 103
Bandiera, Alessandro, 103
Baretti, Giuseppe, 44, **83-87,** 98, 99, 101; 17, 22, 31, 54, 61, 64, 65, 81, 92, 93, 102
Barrili, Anton Giulio, 341
Bartoli, Adolfo, 312
Baudelaire, Pierre Charles, 321, 332
Bazzoni, Giambattista, 239
Beaumarchais, Pierre Augustin de, 70
Beccaria, Cesare, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, **46-47,** 153, 180, 203
Becelli, Giulio Cesare, 74
Belli, Giuseppe, 261
Benedetti, Francesco, 247
Bentivoglio, Cardinal, 6
Bêranger, Pierre Jean de, 266
Berchet, Giovanni, 157, 168, **176-177,** 204, 206, 258, **259-261,** 266, 289
Bergalli, Luisa (Gozzi), 79, 80, 83, 99
Berni, Francesco, 77, 84, 98, 99, 102, 104
Bertòla, Aurelio, 17, **94-95,** 118, 161, 175
Bertoldi, 266
Bettinelli, Saverio, 15, 52, 75, **76-78,** 120
Biamonti, Giuseppe, 316

" Biblioteca italiana," 176, 178, 213, 303
Blair, Robert, 95
Boccalini, Trajano, 6
Boileau, Nicolas, 9
Bosi, 266
Botta, Carlo, 291-3, 294
Branda, Onofrio, 103
Bresciani, Antonio, 254
Brofferio, Angelo, 266
Bürger, Gottfried, 176, 204
Butti, E. A., 336
Byron, Lord, 91, 154, 164, 205, 229, 232, 247, 251, 255, 268, 287, 305, 308

" Caffè," **41-45**, 78, 85, 178
Caloprese, Gregorio, 21, 34
Cantù, Cesare, 188, 202, **243, 246, 295-296**
Capponi, Gino, 217, 246, 254, 262, 294, **295**
Capuana, Luigi, 330, 336
Carcano, Giulio, 243
Carducci, Giosuè, **275-290**, 312, 316, 317, 323, 328; 15, 16, 18, 23, 90, 91, 95, 101, 103, 107, 115, 138, 158, 210, 221, 231, 252, 258, 262, 268, 269, 319, 321, 325, 326, 333
Carrer, Luigi, 168, **247**, 256, 268
Casanova, Giacomo, 65
Casti, Giambattista, 15, 32, 118
Cattaneo, Carlo, 301
Cavallotti, Felice, 336
Cellini, Benvenuto, 86, 125, 245
Cesari, Antonio, 215, 314-315
Cesarotti, Melchiorre, **44-5, 97-8**, 134, 155, 156, 161. *See also under* Ossian
Chateaubriand, François Renè, 163, 199, 342
Chênier, G. M., 148
Chiabrera, Gabriello, 6-7, 8, 115, 115
Chiari, Pietro, 61-63
Chiarini, Giuseppe, 285, 326
Colletta, Pietro, 218, 293-4, 304
Collins, William, 159
" Conciliatore," 178, 179, 204, 248, 249
Condillac, Etienne, 299
Conti, Antonio, 121
Corneille, Pierre, 69, 84, 85, 120
Cossa, Pietro, 273
Cowley, Abraham, 2
Cowper, William, 159
Crashaw, Richard, 2
Crescimbeni, Giovan Mario, 12, 13, 21, 87
Croce, Benedetto, 313, 321, 345, 346
Crudeli, Tommaso, 15-16, 118
Cuoco, Vincenzo, 294-5

Dante. *See* Alighieri
Davila, Enrico Caterino, 6
Deledda, Grazia, 340
Denina, Carlo, 52, 92, 93
Descartes, René, 21, 34, 35
Dickens, Charles, 344
Donne, John, 2
Dostoieffski, 332
Dryden, John, 93, 94, 137

Eckermann, Johann, 198, 199

Fagiuoli, Giambattista, 54
Fantoni, Giovanni, 91-92
Farini, Liugi, 298
Fauriel, Claude, 181, 204
Federici, 141
Ferrari, Giuseppe, 301
Ferrari, Paolo, 273-274
Ferrero, Guglielmo, 298
Ferri, Enrico, 302
Fiacchi, Luigi, 118
Fielding, Henry, 93
Filangeri, Gaetano, 40
Filicaia, Vincenzo da, 8
Flaubert, Gustave, 332
Fogazzaro, Antonio, 342-8
Forteguerri, Niccolò, 99-100

Foscolo, Ugo, 91, 96, 125, 152, 156, 159, **160-174**, 182, 192, 197, 210, 229, 247, 248, 253, 255, 258, 259, 286, 307
Fronto, 212, 214
Frugoni, Carlo, **14-15**, 77, 94, 145

GALIANI, Ferdinando, 32, 39
Galilei, Galileo, 1, 5-6, 33
Gallina, Giacinto, 274
Galvani, Giovanni, 316
Galvani, Luigi, 33
Gamerra, Giovanni, 141
Genovesi, Antonio, 39
Gessner, S., 95, 159
Giacosa, Giuseppe, 335-6
Giannone, Pietro (historian), 47-8
Giannone, Pietro (poet), 261
Gigli, Girolamo, 54, 55, 56
Gioberti, Vincenzo, 218, 250, **299-300**, 301
Gioia, Melchiorre, 298-9
Giordani, Pietro, 107, 147, 294, **303-306**, 314; and Leopardi, 211, 213, 214, 215, 217, 220, 221, 224, 235
"Giornale storico della letteratura italiana," 313
Giraud, Giovanni, 72
Giulini, 51
Giusti, Giuseppe, 206, 237, **261-265**
Gladstone, William, 210, 321
Goethe, J. W. von, 16, 94, 147, 164, 165, 176, 188, 190, 194, 198, 199, 308
Goldoni, Carlo, 53, 54, **55-72**, 81, 85, 114, 123, 139, 141, 274
Góngora, Argote y, 3
Gozzi, Carlo, 61, **63-65**, 71, 79, 85, 99, 139
Gozzi, Gasparo, 61, 63, **78-88**, 99, 101, 108, 120, 140
Gozzoletti, 273
Graf, Arturo, 164, 196, 199, 205, 209, 222, 229, **322-328**
Gravina, Gianvincenzo, 21, 22, 34, **73-74**, **120**
Gray, Thomas, 93, 94, 95, 97, 155, 159, 168, 176, 229
Grossi, Tommaso, 206, 239-243
Guadagnoli, Antonio, 262
Guerrazzi, Francesco Domenico, 237, **251-254**, 257, 268, 280
Guerrini, Olindo ("Lorenzo Stecchetti"), 281, 284, **321-322**, 326
Guicciardini, Francesco, 291,293
Guidi, Alessandro, 8-9, 12

HEGEL, Georg, 310
Heine, Heinrich, 277, 342
Helvetius, Claude, 126
Hervey, Lord, 95
Homer, 9, 37, 73, 74, 97, 128, 129, 156, 160, 161, 168, 169, 214, 229, 276, 301
Hone, William, 255
Horace, 68, 73, 90, 101, 115, 133, 160, 276, 282, 284
Hugo, Victor, 277, 323, 342
Hume, David, 51, 173

IMBONATI, Carlo, 83, 99, 102,180, 182

JOHNSON, Samuel, 81, 84, 85, 86, 93, 159, 184

KEATS, John, 205, 224
Kleist, E. C., 94
Klopstock, F. G., 80, 95, 150,155, 159
Körner, K. T., 187

LA FONTAINE, Jean de, 15, 118
Lamartine, Alphonse, 188, 189, 263, 269
Lami, 80
Leopardi, Giacomo, 6, 7, 129, 164, **210-237**, 266, 286, 303, 305, 307, 311, 322, 330
Lessing, Gottfried, 107, 122
Leva, Giuseppe de, 298

Locke, John, 93, 299
Lombroso, Cesare, 302-303, 323
Lorenzi, Giambattista, 32

MACHIAVELLI, Niccolò, 126, 291, 298
Macpherson, James. *See* Ossian
Maffei, Francesco Scipione, 122-123, 133
Mameli, Goffredo, 266
Mamiani, Terenzio, 276, **301**
Manzoni, Alessandro, 130, **180-209**, 210, 217, 231, 235, 238, 239, 240, 242, 243, 251, 260, 262, 265, 272, 275, 295, 296, 306, **316-317**, 320, 342, 343, 347
Marenco, Carlo, 247
Marino, Giambattista, 3-5, 11, 13, 22
Martelli, Pier Jacopo, 120-121, 122
Mason, William, 94
Maupassant, Guy de, 332, 337
Mazza, Angelo, 94
Mazzini, Giuseppe, 165, 172, 237, 252, 253, 272, 301, **308-309**
Mazzoni, Guido, 285, 291
Mercantini, Luigi, 266
Metastasio, Pietro, 16, 17, 18, 20, **21-31**, 32, 34, 53, 90, 107, 120, 125, 129, 136, 150, 210
Michiel, Giustina Renier, 142
Milton, John, 16, 78, 93, 146, 177, 212, 229
Molière, 54, 55, 59, 69
Montaigne, 126
Montesquieu, Charles de, 36, 38, 40, 46, 52, 76, 92, 107, 120
Monti, Vincenzo, 15, 31, 98, **145-158**, 160, 162, 166, 169, **179**, 181, 269, 286, 301, 303, 304, **315-316**
Muratori, Lodovico, **49-51**, **73**, 88, 295

NAPIONE, Gianfrancesco, 45
Negri, Ada, 324-5
Nelli, Jacopo, 54, 55
Newton, Isaac, 93
Niccolini, Giambattista, 254-258, 304, 307
Niebuhr, B. G., 37, 38, 213, 218
Nietzsche, F. W., 327, 331, 332
Nievo, Ippolito, 271

OBERMANN, 330
Ossian, 93, **97-98**, 133, 142, 148, 155, 229
Ovid, 4, 22, 90

PAGANO, Francesco, 39
Pallavicino, Sforza, 6
Pananti, Filippo, 174, 262
Paradisi, Agostino, 93-94
Parini, Giuseppe, 39, 42, 43, 46, 90, 95, 98, 99, **100-118**, 140, 143, 147, 153, 158, 162, 165, 176, 178, 181, 182, 185, 286, 312
Parnell, Thomas, 94
Pascoli, Giovanni, 283, 317, **319-321**
Passeroni, Gian Carlo, 101-102, 118, 174
Pellico, Silvio, 157, 165, 172, **178-179**, **248-251**, 258, 260, 309
Perfetti, 14
Perticari, Giulio, 157, 316
Petrarch, 2, 9, 14, 73, 77, 88, 115, 124, 125, 127, 140, 173, 212, 217, 220, 221, 286, 311
Pignotti, Lorenzo, 93, 118
Pindar, 6, 7, 8, 13, 155, 168, 169, 290
Pindemonte, Giovanni, 142
Pindemonte, Ippolito, 142, 158-160, 166
Plutarch, 126, 129, 132
Poerio, Alessandro, 219, 266
Ponte, Lorenzo da, 32, 65
Pope, Alexander, 9, 16, 77, 91, 93, 94, 103, 110, 113, 121, 159, 229
Porro, Luigi, 178

Porta, Carlo, 179, 240
Prati, Giovanni, 268-269, 270
Pulci, Luigi, 99, 100

QUADRIO, 88

RANIERI, Antonio, and Leopardi, 219, 220, 227, 233, 235
Rapisardi, Mario, 323
Redi, Francesco, 8, 77
Regaldi, Giuseppe, 269
Richardson, Samuel, 62, 93, 107, 141, 164
Roberto, Federico de, 338-339
Rolli, Paolo, 16-18
Romagnosi, G. D., 298-299
Ronsard, Pierre de, 6, 7
Rosini, G., 243
Rosmini, Antonio, 207, **299**, 343
Rossetti, Gabriele, 23, 258-259
Rossi, Gherardo de, 72
Rousseau, J. J., 39, 40, 126
Rovani, Giuseppe, 271
Rovetta, Gerolamo, 336, 341
Ruffini, G., 272

SANCTIS, Francesco de, 29, 88, 108, 114, 117, 134, 136, 141, 163, 164, 172, 207, 227, 238, 242, 244, 245, 257, 258, 260, **310-312**
Sarpi, Fra Paolo, 6
Savioli, Lodovico, 90-91, 161
Schiller, J. C. F. von, 65, 135, 176, 190, 255, 308
Scott, Sir W., 176, 194, 199, 200, 203, 239, 242, 338
Serao, Matilde, 317, 339-340
Sestini, Bartolommeo, 246
Settembrini, Luigi, 309-310
Shakespeare, 19, 20, 63, 74, 86, 89, 93, 97, 121, 142, 148, 149, 159, 190, 197, 212, 229, 255, 308
Shelley, 232, 256, 283, 287, 321
Sismondi, J. C. L. de S. de, 136, 154, 193, 237
Spallanzani, Lazzaro, 33
"Spectator," 41, 42, 78, 81
Spolverini, Giambattista, 108
Staël, Mme. de, 154, 163, 175, 176, 181
Stampa, Gaspara, 247
Stecchetti, Lorenzo. *See* Guerrini, Olindo
Sterne, Lawrence, 93, 96, 101, 102, 166, 197, 253
Swift, Jonathan, 93, 253

TACITUS, 35, 127, 161, 294
Tanzi, Carl Antonio, 103
Tasso, Torquato, 1, 2, 5, 21, 22, 77, 127, 205, 210, 241, 276
Tassoni, Alessandro, 9-10, 77
Testi, Fulvio, 7-8, 220
Thomson, James, 93, 94, 95
Tiraboschi, Girolamo, 80, 87-88
Tommaseo, Niccolò, 197, 235, 266, **306-308**
Torti, Giovanni, 178
Trissino, Giangiorgio, 7, 74
Troya, Carlo, 296-297

VARANO, Alfonso, **98**, 145, 155
Varese, Carlo, 239
Verga, Giovanni, 330, 337-338
Verlaine, Paul, 332
Verri, Alessandro, 41, 43, 45, 96-97, 142
Verri, Pietro, 39, **41-42**, **45-46**, 47, 51, 61, 85, 106, 110, 153, 178, 216
Vico, Giambattista, **34-38**, 40, 172
Vieusseux, Giampietro, 218, 295, 306
Villari, Pasquale, 298
Virgil, 76, 117, 169, 214, 276, 282, 320
Visconti, Ermes, 146, 178, 194, 206
Vittorelli, Jacopo, 91, 161
Vivanti, Annie, 325
Voiture, Vincent, 3